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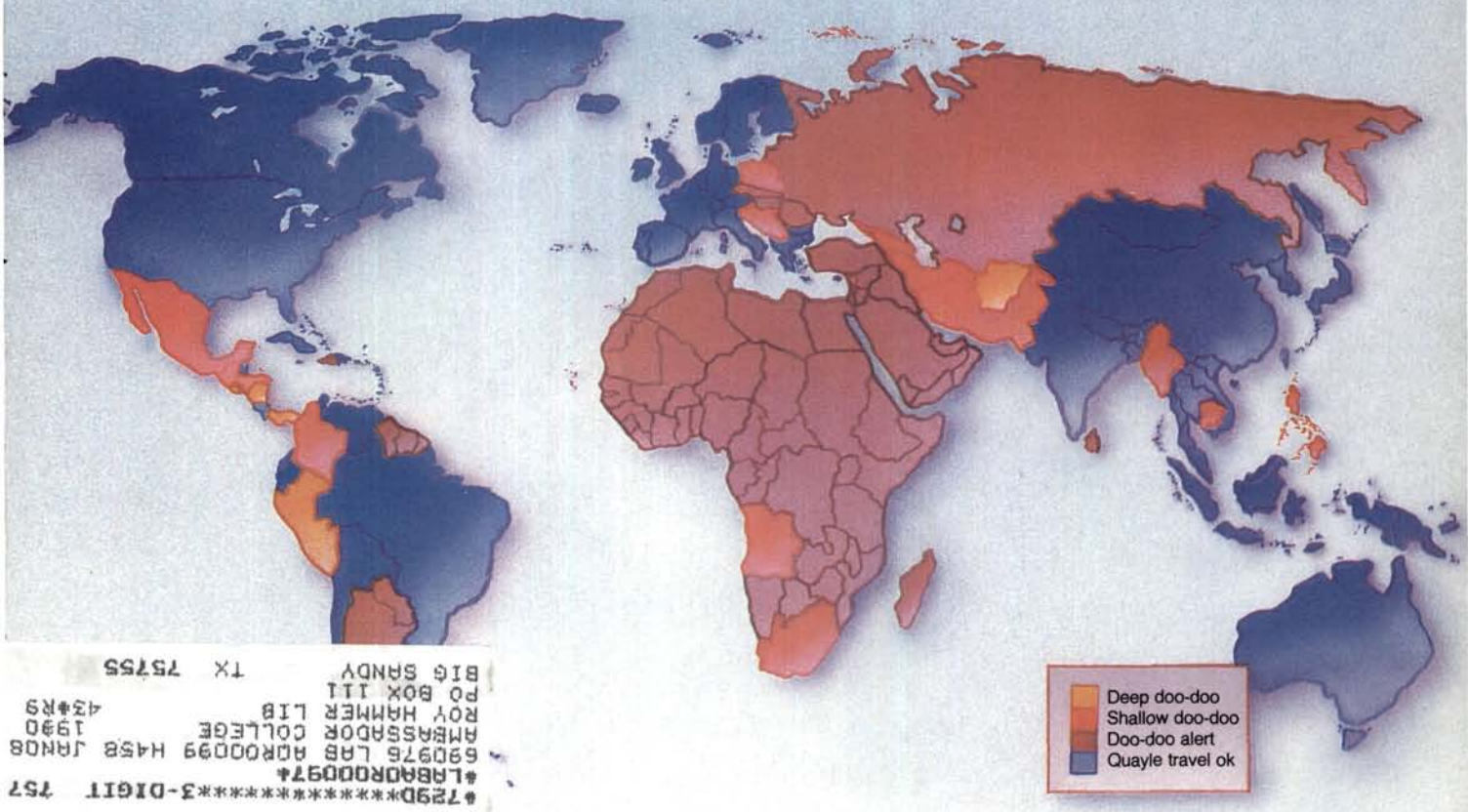
The world that faces the next president

by Morton Kondracke



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ISSUE 3,853

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NOVEMBER 21, 1988

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FROM WASHINGTON

KKR-AAAZY

Three very different prices have been placed on the RJR Nabisco Corporation in the past few weeks. Each price reflects a widely held theory about American capitalism. Trouble is, those theories, like those prices, can't all be right.

Not long ago, the company's shares were being traded on the New York Stock Exchange for around $55 a share, representing a total value of about $13 billion for the company. Widespread public share ownership is how almost all of America's great companies are structured, and schoolchildren are taught what a wonderful thing this is. The claim rests on two premises: (1) that the stock market works efficiently to set the right price for companies' shares; and (2) more important, that the system of public ownership combined with professional management produces well-run corporations and a prosperous economy.

For decades left-wing critics such as John Kenneth Galbraith have argued that the separation of ownership and control—the distinguishing feature of the modern American corporation—gives managers enormous power to serve their own interests, rather than those of the shareholders or the public, and undermines much of the standard case for free market capitalism. But Galbraith has found few supporters in corporate America.

On October 20, RJR Nabisco's management offered to buy the company from the shareholders, with mostly borrowed money, for $75 a share or $17 billion—a 30 percent premium over the stock market price. How can that be sensible? Well, it seems that widespread public share ownership is not the most efficient system after all. Managers work better when they own the company. Furthermore, financing a company through debt rather than equity (stock) is good discipline; the prospect of all those mandatory interest payments (rather than voluntary dividends) concentrates the mind.

Many businesspeople endorse this plausible theory, but few endorse its necessary implication: that the New York Stock Exchange is a fraud on those millions of ordinary investors and on America in general. Public trading on the Exchange does not assure a fair price for stocks, and the system of public share ownership does not assure that America's major industries are well managed. Business apologists tend to defend both the stock market and these market-swamping special deals as Adam Smith's invisible hand at work. But clearly one invisible hand doesn't know what the other one is doing.

There are two compelling complaints about management buyouts. First, if a company's managers know how to increase its value 30 percent, why didn't they do so when they were being paid fat salaries by the shareholders? And second, when managers sell the company to themselves, how can the price be fair? The profits on management buyouts have been quick and gargantuan, which suggests that the shareholders got screwed.

As if to demonstrate that management underpays, the Wall Street firm of Kohlberg, Kravis, Roberts soon came along to top management's offer for RJR Nabisco. KKR offered $90 a share or more than $20 billion—a 50 percent premium over the stock market price. If this company is really worth $20 billion, in private hands and properly run (or broken up), that is an even crueler judgment on the American system of public stock ownership.

But is it worth $20 billion? KKR offered this humongous price before it even had access to the company's books (like bidding on a house without going inside). That adds some weight to the charge that the buyout boom is a classic speculative bubble, fed by bankers hungry for fees and perversely encouraged by the tax system. When the bubble bursts, the skeptics warn, the whole economy could get soaked.

Who's right? I'm not sure. But either the current buyout wave is dangerously excessive or the entire American corporate structure is a fraud. Take your pick.

Whatever your conclusion, there's no doubt something silly and wasteful is going on. The R. J. Reynolds tobacco company and Nabisco, the food manufacturer, merged just three years ago—at huge expense in fees—on the then-fashionable theory that tobacco companies ought to diversify and that similar marketing patterns made tobacco and food an efficient mix. Now both parties vying for the combined firm plan to break it up, on the grounds that the food and tobacco operations will be more efficient separately.

In the last buyout war, a few years ago, outside "raiders" like T. Boone Pickens attacked slothful entrenched management and the corporate establishment charged the raiders with "plunder." Now corporate managers do their own raiding, of their own companies and others', and we hear no more talk about either sloth or plunder.

Avis Rent-a-Car has changed hands 11 times since its founding in 1946, in response to every Wall Street fad. In the 1960s it was owned for a while by ITT, at a time when conglomerates were all the rage. In the past decade Avis was swallowed by Norton Simon, which was swallowed by Esmark, which was swallowed by Beatrice Foods, all on the theory that bigger is better. Then Beatrice was taken private by KKR and broken up, on the theory that smaller is better. In 1986 Avis was sold to its managers plus a small group of investors led by former Treasury Secretary William Simon, who said, "Management will do an even better job running the firm as an entrepreneurial situation." Fourteen months later management and the investors sold out to the employees (at a $700 million profit on a $10 million investment, made possible in part by federal tax laws meant to encourage employee ownership). The theory this time was that employees will work harder if they have a stake in the profits. Each change of ownership generated large fees for bankers and lawyers.

Both buyout offers for RJR Nabisco are being financed by pension funds, banks, and insurance companies. The managers of these organizations are just as detached from the people whose money they're responsible for as traditional corpocrats are from their shareholders. So the argument that leveraged buyouts are good for the economy because they transfer key decisions from hired managers to real owners rings a bit hollow. There's good reason to wonder if these people know what they're doing. In the days since RJR Nabisco was "put in play," its stock price has shot up, reflecting the anticipated buyout, but the price of its bonds has plummeted, reflecting a fear of default. The 16 percent drop in key RJR Nabisco bonds reflects the market's judgment that there is now something like a one-in-six chance the company will go bankrupt. But then, what does the market know? □

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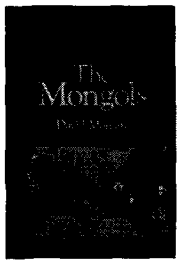

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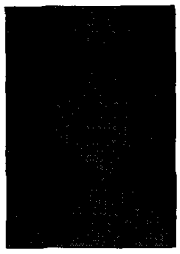

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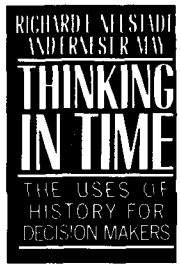

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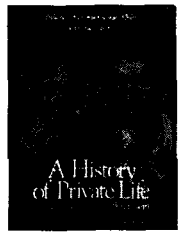

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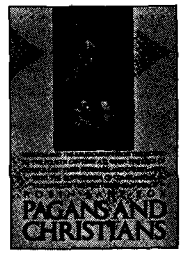

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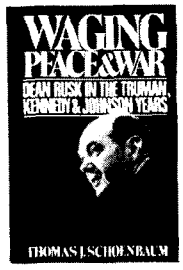

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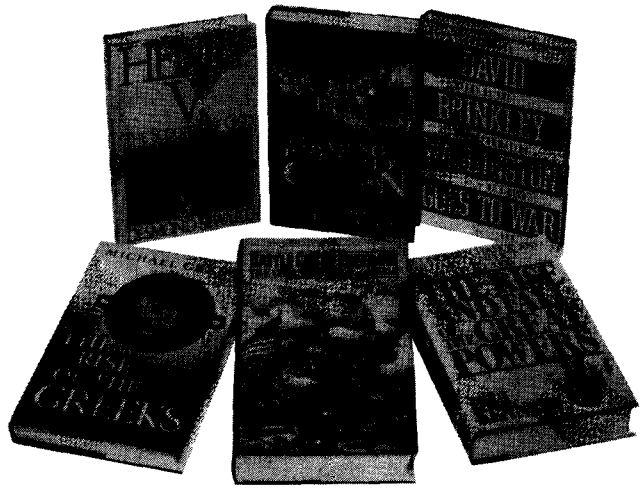

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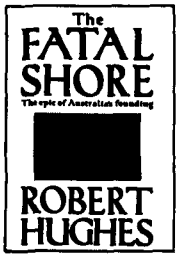

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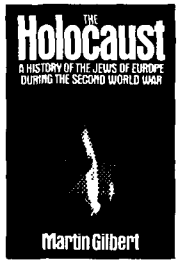

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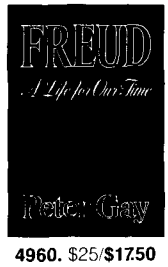

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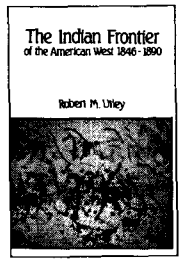

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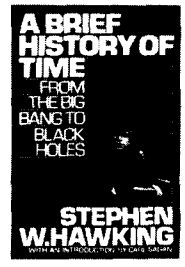

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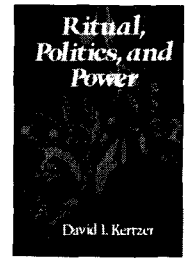

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SPEAKING OF ROOSEVELT

To the editors:

I agree strongly with Henry Fairlie that the trivialization of American political debate will continue to play a dominant role in the selection of mediocre and inoffensive candidates ("The Collapse of Oratory," October 10). However, though I understand the parallels between Governor Dukakis and Governor Wilson, I am sorry that Fairlie chose to use Wilson's attack on Theodore Roosevelt, effective though it was. It has been said that, in that last age before radio, Roosevelt's voice had been heard by more people around the world than any other. In 1904 Roosevelt became the first president to campaign actively for office. In fact, his rise was greatly due to his effectiveness in front of a crowd. And there was the necessary love of a good scrape. As Edmund Morris said, "He obviously enjoyed getting up on a chair and shouting at people."

Fairlie should have highlighted Roosevelt's speeches during that election. Though he lost, when a man can so successfully use the public forum to break away a majority of Republican voters from their nominee and ensure a second-place victory for a third-party candidate, that could only happen in a nation that did not shrink from the forceful use of the spoken word.

JOHN J. MCCARTNEY
Manhasset, New York

CRIMINAL CALCULATIONS

To the editors:

I am only a lowly corrections officer in a large urban jail, but I can recognize in Tamar Jacoby's review of books on criminal justice the shameless liberal connotations in the use of the word "supposedly" ("Go Indirectly to Jail," October 3). Jacoby writes: "Crime, they insist, cannot be much reduced by stern police measures, or by fixed prison terms intended to alter the cost-benefit calculations that supposedly run through the heads of would-be offenders." Let me assure Jacoby that offenders do make such calculations, with a sophistication that might surprise someone who insists on seeing crime as primarily a spontaneous and blameless phenomenon brought on in poor neighborhoods by too many years of Republican economics. In the state of Washington, we have a habitual-offender statute that works on a rather complicated point system, and many criminals do figure out just how far they can go before the consequences become prohibitive. To most of them, jail is a drag, but it happens so rarely that inmates speak of "catching" a sentence almost as if it were a random stroke of fate. In a sense, they are correct. Relative to the amount of things they get away with, catching an actual jail term is quite unusual.

Jacoby is right that the conservative swing in criminal justice has yet to produce any indisputable effect on the crime rate. In Seattle the reason for this is clear—conservatives don't want to pay the expense of keeping offenders in prison. What good is it to be stalwart about catching and convicting the bad guys unless you are also willing to finish the job? As the Washington Diarist pointed out in the same issue, both Bush and Reagan have been willing enough to embrace furlough programs when it suited them to save a buck.

MICHAEL L. COOK
Kent, Washington

MR. UNIVERSE

To the editors:

Reckon you fellers in Washington figure if Jim Baker's the most overrated man there, he must be America's most overrated man too ("Mr. Schmooze" by Fred Barnes, October 17). We look at it different down here in Florida. Going from the biggest one in Washington to the biggest one in the country in just 15 pages! Well, I'd call that on the way up for sure. I skipped right on back to the Diarist thinking ol' Jim might already be the world champion, but I guess that hasn't been decided yet.

JEAN FITZGERALD
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

OL' MISINTERPRETATIONS

To the editors:

John B. Judis explains Mississippi politics ("White and Wrong," October 24) with the same old Northern press stereotypes, attributing to us unique traits such as racism, political pluralism, and poverty. Sure, housing for the state's poor is deplorable and unemployment is higher than the national average. But when our problems are reported in the press, it is as though the Howard Beach incident couldn't have happened anywhere but here, there are no predominately white private schools north of Memphis, and no white outside our state uses the word "nigger." Film crews won't rest until they find children in front of a tattered tar-papered shack and a pick-up truck load of "good ol' boys" speeding down a dirt road. With national exposure limited to these "bites," it's no wonder we have a hard time attracting industry.

Judis claims our racial segregation and economic backwardness make it "virtually impossible for Northern Democrats to win Mississippi's electors." Maybe. But the country as a whole has not elected too many Northern Democrats lately, and it looks as though we're not about to this year either. Judis also claims that many Mississippi whites have "bought the theory that Dukakis made a 'secret deal' with [Jesse] Jackson . . . that would give Jackson untold power in a Dukakis administration." None of my friends have heard this. We have been following the campaign like everybody else. Given Jackson's scant campaigning for Dukakis, why would we assume he's going to have "untold powers"? Although Judis describes fairly accurately the changing political climate in the state and the nature of upcoming elections, we handful of TNR readers in Mississippi would appreciate it if he'd avoid the banjo-on-my-knee jerking we've come to expect.

PAUL INGRAM
Vicksburg, Mississippi

ECONOMY OF THOUGHT

To the editors:

When Robert Kuttner takes Bush to task for wanting to reduce the capital gains tax, Kuttner only shows that he fails to appreciate the economic principle involved ("Dunkirk II," October 24). Last time the tax was cut in half, according to Bush, revenues increased four times. Since that can be expected to happen each time the rate is cut in half, if halved 20 times, receipts will increase about one trillion times. In spite of naysayers like Kuttner this idea will put Bush up there with such modern conservative economic

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
NOVEMBER 21, 1988

SHAMIR'S VICTORY

In the Israeli elections on November 1, Shimon Peres's Labor Party and its immediate allies on the left polled marginally more votes (and won marginally more Knesset seats) than Yitzhak Shamir's Likud bloc and its immediate allies on the right. But it will probably be Shamir who, after weeks of political jockeying, will get to form a government. The parties that will give Shamir his parliamentary majority are the religious parties. The Likud has always been the more logical partner for the religious parties because it is more willing—some would say eager—to pay the theocratic blackmail demanded by the orthodox and ultraorthodox interests. In the next Knesset this is likely to be a very big bill, indeed. In a narrowly divided body of 120, the religious bloc now commands some 18 or 19 votes. This is the great surprise of the election.

Ironically, the religious parties to whom Shamir's nationalist coalition will have to be indebted—Shas, Agudath Yisrael, and Degel Torah—are anti-Zionist parties. That is, they believe that the creation of Israel in 1948 was a blasphemy against the Lord because the restoration of a Jewish commonwealth should have properly awaited the coming of the Messiah. This is not a metaphor for them, but literal doctrine. To these religious zealots, dealing with any secular government is an inconvenience, but dealing with a Jewish secular government is an indignity. Nevertheless, they deal, and deal shrewdly. What concerns them are the eternal questions—matters like sabbath observance, the dietary laws, and "who really *is* a Jew?"

What makes the religious so nettlesome is that they are not content simply to protect the piety of their own members; they are driven to coerce the piety of others. They hardly care a fig for issues like territory. They prefer to leave the matter of security to the generals. Some of their leaders have been cited as vaguely dovish, but this is more out of indifference to the Arabs, and perhaps disdain for them, than a true political position. Mostly they will battle for expanded public financial subsidies for their educational institutions and for the continued right of their sons and daughters to be exempt (rather like Israel's Arabs) from military service and all other obligations to society.

However pure or otherwise their relationship to God, these religious extremists are a corrupt and corrupting obscurantist force in Israeli life. It may be evidence of God's justice, or perhaps His bitter sense of irony, that a blustery national chauvinist like Shamir will not be able to implant another bivouac Jewish settlement in the heart of an Arab town unless he simultaneously pays fealty in hard currency to the religious ideas of some rabbis who live in Brooklyn (where the spiritual leaders of some of these sects reside). But if Shamir pays too much, he will alienate some of his own supporters. And he will risk the estrangement of Israel from almost all of Diaspora Jewry outside Brooklyn.

The real election campaign between Labor and Likud was waged—with the usual evasions, caveats, and equivocations—over the West Bank and Gaza, and in the shadow of the Palestinian rebellion or *intifada*. The results show how riven the Israeli population is. The split between the two big blocs was just about what it has been for the last two or three years in opinion polls. The uprising has not really moved Jewish opinion very much at all. At least in the privacy of the polling booth, it apparently has not moved Israeli Arab opinion either. More than 70 percent of eligible Arab voters turned out, but only one more seat was gained by the Arab parties, which means that masses of Arabs continued to vote for the Zionist parties. The *intifada* may well have caused both Labor and Likud to lose a bit to their more extreme allies: it persuaded the doves to become a bit more dovish, the hawks to turn a bit more hawkish. No big change, except

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that Rabbi Kahane's place in the Knesset will now be filled by a retired general, a convert from left to right, who favors "transfer," the polite equivalent of expulsion of Arabs, and goes by the anomalous nickname of Gandi.

For the past few months the PLO's friends in the media had been alerting us to an imminent gesture by Yasir Arafat. This gesture was supposed to encourage the Israeli electorate to entrust power to Peres and Labor, the party whose entire leadership, including Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, is committed to the "territories for peace" negotiations formula. The gesture even had a name; it was called "the October surprise." King Hussein played his appointed role and said in the last days that he was willing to re-enter the game he had so dramatically abandoned in July. But from Arafat and the various other PLO rumps there was nothing to suggest to any Israeli that the Palestinians had at last been seized by realism. Then, only days before the election, Palestinian terrorists did what comes naturally to them. They firebombed a civilian bus outside Jericho. When the smoke cleared, there among the charred remains of the vehicle were a mother and her three children, dead. Whatever last-minute electoral movement there might have been to Peres's peace camp was decisively aborted. Another well-reported terrorist incident occurred in Jerusalem early on the morning of election day.

Between these two ghoulish episodes of murderous intent an interview with Arafat was published in *Time* magazine giving the chairman's last thoughts on the future of the conflict. They were, alas, in many ways also his oldest thoughts, what *Time* called "familiar positions." One of them was that he would not renounce terrorism in the territories. To Israelis this was not news; they had just experienced in blood his refusal to renounce. And then came the flat statement: "We are opposed to a Zionist state; Zionism is a racist movement. . . . We don't want a racist state in this area." Perhaps the professional yea-sayers in the press and the universities will find some way to explain this away. But Israelis know what it means, and Americans should also. Arafat uses the words "Zionist state" and "racist state" to delegitimize the state of the Jewish national movement. When the Arabs want independent states, it is national self-determination; when the Jews have struggled to re-establish their state, it is racist.

It's not hard to understand why Arafat chose to repeat his hoary rhetoric just a few days before Israel's election. He is genuinely terrified that Israelis intent on probing the Palestinian willingness for peace would be in a position to do so. That would expose his nakedness. He prefers instead the role of lachrymose and homeless wanderer. So he has made sure by his words, and his followers by their brutal deeds, that Israelis intent on attempting peace will be relegated to the sidelines in Jerusalem. The October surprise turned out to be the old revanche.

SOME OBSERVERS see less gloomy consequences from the election. A few think that even Shamir will be frightened by the embrace of the rabbis and will prefer to share power with Labor in another government of national unity—this time with Likud as the senior partner and no sharing of the prime ministership. Some even think that the rabbis, as cautious as they are cynical, are actually afraid of Shamir, afraid that he will lead the country into war. Even men with their eyes on the other world know that wars kill. Perhaps these rabbis, the theory goes, would push their followers into an alliance with Labor. We wish it were so. As of the morning after, both these calculations read like wishful thinking.

With Likud in power, the right will finally have the chance, unconstrained and uninhibited by politics, to show how it would quell the *intifada*. Maybe the uprising will become more violent and invite a harsher Israeli response. But Shamir will be under pressure from the new American president to offer some political initiatives to move the peace process along. He will offer ideas with no valence and no salience. Secure in the knowledge that the Israelis have a rejectionist at their helm, the Palestinians could become aggressively conciliatory. But that also is not likely. For years the Israelis have had no one to talk to about peace. With the ascendancy of Shamir we fear that there is a new and macabre symmetry in the situation. With two peoples in the grip of history, each will be able to say, "We have no one to talk to."

NOTEBOOK

□ MORAL EQUIVALENCE (AND FIRST THINGS FIRST): Tom Brokaw opened the "NBC Nightly News" on October 26 with the teaser: "Freedom for the whales—it may not be long now. And the same may be true for Soviet political prisoners."

□ GAFFE OF THE YEAR: We waited until the end of the campaign to make sure it wasn't topped, but this year's award for the best political gaffe (a "gaffe" being when a politician gets into trouble for telling the truth) goes to Republican Senator David Karnes of Nebraska, who said in a debate with his rival, Democratic former Governor Bob Kerrey, that Nebraska has "too many farmers." That's a big reason Karnes is now favored to lose. As an aesthetic judgment, Karnes's remark is open to legitimate (though not necessarily unanimous) criticism. As economics, however, it is faultless. The history of American agriculture—one of our nation's great economic success stories—is one of fewer and fewer farmers producing more and more food. Federal farm policy is essentially designed to slow or stop this healthy development. Instead of bribing people to stay in farming, the government should be bribing them to get out. Former Senator Karnes will be back in Nebraska next year with plenty of time to think through some of these policy implications.

□ THE FELIX ROHAYTN MEMORIAL AWARD for crying all the way to the bank: this year's winner is lawyer Martin Lipton of Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz. Wringing his hands over Wall Street's leveraged buyout binge, Lipton

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told the *New York Times* that the "world is driving to a precipice." At least Lipton's enjoying the ride. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, his firm charged Kraft Inc. $20 million for two weeks' work in its recent takeover by Philip Morris. Even if you assume Lipton and his associates worked round the clock, that comes to about $5,000 an hour.

□ SANDINISTA HOLIDAY: The Boston City Council proclaimed November 3 "Ernesto Cardenal Day" to honor the Nicaraguan priest and poet for promoting "Latin America's awakening out of its colonial and neo-colonial past." Cardenal got religion in 1956 and spent ten years in a Trappist monestary. In 1969 he got religion again, becoming a Sandinista under the tutelage of Tomas Borge, now Nicaragua's cutthroat interior minister. After the revolution, Cardenal served as minister of culture. One of his many writings holds that "A Christian should embrace Marxism if he wants to be with God and all men." On Cardenal Day in Boston, five leaders of the non-violent democratic opposition in Nicaragua were three weeks into a hunger strike after being beaten and teargassed in Tomas Borge's LaGranja Prison. They were jailed, by Cardenal's lights, in the name of God, Marx, and Mankind. Boston, hope you had a nice day.

□ NOW, CHILDREN:

Washington Post Net Falls

—*New York Times*, October 26

Washington Post Profit Up

—*Washington Post*, same day
(thanks to Jeff Shear, Alexandria, Virginia)

□ DOUBLE BILLING

Reagan says U.S. to pay for razing Moscow embassy

—*Washington Times*, October 28

U.S. Bills Soviets for Embassy

—*Washington Post*, same day
(thanks to George S. Weigel Jr., Washington D.C.)

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

JOB CREATION

THE ONLY officially taboo subject at George Bush's campaign headquarters is the makeup of a Bush presidency or even the transition to a Bush administration. "It's certainly the belief of Mr. [James] Baker and anybody with half a brain that we have no right to talk about that," says spokesman Mark Goodin. Baker, the campaign chairman, fears that chatter about the fruits of victory may breed overconfidence, which in turn could threaten victory. Still, after Bush trounced Michael Dukakis in their second debate on October 13, Baker was unable to stifle tentative talk among Bushies about the "T-word"—transition. Naturally they'd all like to work in the transition, since that's a clear path to a job in the Bush administration.

The experienced political operatives, some issues nerds, and a few others will make it to the transition staff. Most of the munchkins, junior campaign aides, won't. They'll have to settle for jobs at the inaugural committee, which offers a more circuitous and less certain route to permanent employment on Bush's team. But at least they'll gain the single most important asset in getting a sub-Cabinet or lower post: a Bush credential. In truth, this is not that hard to come by. Conservatives associated with the campaign have singled out 19 different categories of Bush credentials (things like ally in Bush's 1970 Senate race in Texas, supporter of his 1980 presidential bid, financial contributor, early 1988 backer, etc.). As a general rule, the more credentials, the better one's chances of a top job.

BUT THERE ARE other criteria. It's no secret that Bush would like to populate his administration with younger people (under 45), partly to convey a nice image, partly to solidify the Republican Party's appeal to younger voters. Bush also wants more blacks, Hispanics, and women in his administration than there have been in Ronald Reagan's. And from all indications, Bush and his senior advisers want only a few tokens from the ranks of the conservative movement and the New Right. "It's our time now, not theirs," says a Bush aide. Finally, Bush would be happier with folks who have Reagan administration experience but aren't working for Reagan now.

The current Reagan crowd presents a touchy problem for Bush. Many of the Reagan appointees—most, I'd guess—want to stay on. They're already lobbying frantically to stick around. But Bush wants his own people. One of the perks of office is the right to dole out jobs. It's also good politics. The creation of a new administration stirs excitement and invariably draws gushingly favorable press coverage. It can also generate political momentum, which Bush will badly need after a bitter election. What Bush doesn't need is 3,000 Reagan appointees on the street next January 20, all grousing that they were cruelly tossed aside.

The transition to a Bush presidency, assuming it happens, will be the first intraparty transition since 1928. (I'm not counting sudden transfers of power caused by the death or resignation of a president.) The Bush high command has a plan for easing the friction. Shortly after November 8, Reagan will ask all the political appointees in the administration to submit their resignations. But instead of being pushed out quickly, they'll be allowed to linger in their jobs until their successors actually show up. That may not occur until next summer, or later. The Reaganites will

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be allowed to apply for new jobs in the Bush administration, but few will get them. Nor will former officials from the Ford and Nixon administrations get any preference. The Bushies have a bias against them as "throwbacks."

THERE'S ONLY one group of Reaganites that Bush may retain: young, midlevel appointees ripe for promotion. If they have a Bush credential or two, or happen to be female, black, or Hispanic, so much the better. For example, Betsy Ussery, 39, the assistant commissioner of the Head Start program, is a prime candidate. She worked on the Bush campaign's task force on education. Her husband, Michael, a deputy assistant secretary of state until last summer, is a top assistant to Lee Atwater, Bush's campaign manager. Another potential holdover is Mildred Webber, 32, who rose in less than ten years from a secretary on Capitol Hill to deputy assistant secretary of transportation for governmental affairs.

The only certain holdovers are the Cabinet members installed on Bush's personal recommendation this year—Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady, Attorney General Richard Thornburgh, and Education Secretary Louis Cavazos. Bush is all but certain to keep Labor Secretary Ann McLaughlin, whom he knows and likes. In the early days of the transition, the press is sure to concentrate on Baker and Craig Fuller, the chief of Bush's vice presidential staff. Which one will be White House chief of staff?

That sounds like a silly question, since Baker was chief of staff in Reagan's first term and doesn't relish a repeat performance. But there's a plausible scenario for a Baker return. It goes like this. Bush will be in for a hard time with the Democratic Congress. House Speaker Jim Wright is eager to assert his control over the national agenda, and Democrats are primed to argue that Bush has no mandate. Enter Baker. He is the one Bushie respected by Democrats in Congress. If Bush's top priority is to deal with the deficit, Baker could help. He almost reached a grand compromise on taxes and spending with Congress in 1983. Once a deficit deal is arranged, Baker can move to secretary of state, the job he really wants. Until then, George Shultz can keep the seat warm. This is only a scenario, remember. Talking Baker into it wouldn't be easy.

By tradition, the White House staff is filled from the upper echelons of the campaign. Bush is a traditionalist, and Atwater could have practically any job. But he says he intends to stay out of government. The campaign aide whose skills would be most useful at the White House is an Atwater aide, James Pinkerton, 30. He's a conservative issues junkie who's in charge of research, especially research into Michael Dukakis's record. Pinkerton gets high marks from his superiors, and he has the requisite background. He worked for the Reagan campaign in 1980, then served in the White House until 1983, when he joined the Reagan-Bush campaign. In 1985 he got in on the ground floor at the Fund for America's Future, the PAC that was the precursor of the Bush campaign. Pinkerton can probably count on a senior post at the White House.

One rung down the job ladder is Lisa Duperier, 32, who works on the "women's coalition" for Bush. Besides her campaign job, she has two other Bush credentials. She backed him in 1980 and was a Bush delegate from Texas to the 1988 Republican convention. In 1986 she ran an impressive race for Congress against Democratic Representative Jack Brooks of Texas, but lost. She calls herself "a litmus test conservative." But she worked for the Wednesday Club, the organization of moderate Republican House members, for two years before joining the Reagan administration in 1982 as a Justice Department assistant. If there's such a thing, Duperier is a Bush Republican, a conservative with moderate tendencies (or maybe, a moderate with conservative tendencies). She's a cinch to be offered a good position in the Bush administration.

Another class of Republicans isn't as likely to be tapped: the late arrivals in the Bush camp. Dinesh D'Souza, 27, became the "director of Catholic liaison" for the campaign last September, and it's his only Bush credential. He's a conservative activist who was managing editor of *Policy Review* and worked a year for Gary Bauer, the White House domestic policy chief. D'Souza is inclined to work in a Bush administration. He's reconciled his hard-line conservatism to Bush Republicanism. "Conservatism is in its second stage," he says. "It has to move from a powerful, clear articulation of ideas to a consensus-building translation of those ideas into practice. Conservatives often shrink from the pragmatic test. Conservatism should be up for that." D'Souza is, at any rate.

Pinkerton, Duperier, and D'Souza are not the upper-class types among whom Bush was reared and educated. In fact, there aren't many folks in the Bush campaign from old money and privileged backgrounds. Jim Baker qualifies, but the Bush supporter who best exemplifies the breed has already been slated for a job—Dan Quayle.

FRED BARNES

THE MONEY CULTURE

HO HO HO GREEN GIANT

ON OCTOBER 25 Henry Kravis, partner of the Wall Street leveraged buyout firm Kohlberg, Kravis, Roberts (KKR), made his bid to become a footnote in history. He offered to pay $90 a share, or $20 billion, for RJR Nabisco, purveyor of Fig Newtons, Del Monte green beans, and Winston cigarettes. That set a record for the largest bid ever made for a public company. The old record bid had been made the previous day, also for RJR Nabisco, by a team consisting of Nabisco's management and Wall Street investment bankers Shearson Lehman.

Peter Cohen, the CEO of Shearson Lehman, was heartbroken when he heard about Kravis's rival bid. "We ski together and socialize together," said Cohen, "and I

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thought there was a higher level of conduct called for here." Imagine. Just when you think you can trust a competitor, he goes and competes against you. Distinctly ungentlemanly, wouldn't you say? Before you know it, Pete, Hank'll be cutting in lift lines.

After KKR's bid, Cohen, understandably, decided he had better have a word with his former friend Kravis. "I can't believe you are interfering in my deal," said Cohen to Kravis.

"I must be in this deal," said Kravis to Cohen, "I can't afford not to. It's my franchise."

What is more, Kravis blames Cohen for violating their little understanding. "They [Shearson Lehman] learned the business from us. Now they're turning around trying to elbow us out of our business," said an employee of KKR.

Now boys. Think about what you are saying. It's one thing for investment bankers to turn corporate America into a board game. It's quite another for them to divide up the properties in advance. Cohen and Kravis are being less than discreet about the new, widespread desire on Wall Street (now that investment banks have gotten into the business of buying companies for themselves, instead of just representing them) to keep the prices down. Had Kravis not interfered, Cohen might have snapped up Nabisco for a song.

There's another word for what this tiff is about: collusion. Their indignant cries of foul sound strangely like the feuding between Arab oil ministers when an OPEC member exceeds its quotas. True, OPEC is a seller's cartel, and Kravis and Cohen are buyers. But there is nothing different about the principles underpinning a buyer's cartel. There aren't many buyers of $20 billion companies (perhaps as few as two), just as there aren't many sellers of crude oil. If they get together they can set their purchase price to maximize their profits as would a rational monopolist. And as long as you can be confident no one can top your bid, you don't have to offer as much.

What is surprising is how openly Cohen and Kravis are beefing about the cartel busting up. It is a tribute to how little respect they have for those who might interfere with their game, and to how much money they stand to make. The stakes must be high for the boardrooms to be leaking as freely as they are. So before getting too wrapped up in the tragedy of a broken friendship, the shards of which they have trodden upon each day recently in the pages of the *Wall Street Journal*, let's have a look at what the Nabisco deal means for these two men.

IN SEPTEMBER the CEO of RJR Nabisco, F. Ross Johnson, decided to buy out his shareholders. He wanted, like so many managers these days, to own his own company. To get it, reports Bryan Burroughs of the *Journal*, "Mr. Johnson turned to *his* close friend, James Robinson, chairman of American Express Co., Shearson's parent, about backing a buyout." The buyout will be accomplished in the manner of all leveraged buyouts (LBOs). The Big Fig, the Jolly Green Giant, and other assets of RJR Nabisco will be pledged as collateral, much as one pledges one's house to obtain a mortgage. The only thing unusual about the proposed deal is its size. Size is important. If Nabisco can be mortgaged, so can other giants. The first man to do a giant deal becomes the world's expert in giant deals. The winner of the Nabisco auction will stand first in line for the others. The current market value of General Motors, for example, is a mere $24 billion. Sears, Mobil, Eastman Kodak also become fair game once Nabisco has been bought.

To buy Nabisco, Johnson and friends needed to borrow as much as $17 billion from banks and institutional investors in the form of junk bonds. A year ago, after the stock market crash, it would have been harder to borrow $17 billion against a company's assets. A few institutional investors changed their ways for good after the crash, feeling in their bones that the crash demonstrated that company values are subject to wild and unpredictable swings.

But to everyone else the crash last October had no real lasting meaning. The stock market dropped. Then it stopped dropping. That's all. It was just after the crash, the *Journal* reports, that Kravis, over dinner, first raised the idea of a buyout with Johnson. He knew he'd have no trouble finding lenders for the deal. The goal was clear: to buy the company from the shareholders for less than it was worth, auction it in pieces at fair market values, and pocket the difference.

HOWEVER, there's more than one way to skin a shareholder, and Kravis and Johnson fell out over technique. RJR Nabisco breaks down, roughly, into two parts: food and tobacco. Kravis wanted to keep the food and sell the cigarettes. Johnson wanted to keep the cigarettes and sell the food. Kravis, the trader, was thinking like a businessman. He saw that, although the tobacco business was extremely profitable, its future was jeopardized by growing public awareness of the hazards of smoking.

Johnson, the businessman, was thinking like a trader. He saw that the prices of food companies were temporarily inflated by mergers and acquisitions activity (mainly by other tobacco companies trying frantically to diversify). He also saw that tobacco companies were undervalued by the stock market, as investors ran from the surgeon general. A Wall Street equity trader would applaud Johnson's instincts. It isn't surprising that he possesses these. Johnson was, in the late 1950s in Canada, an equity trader himself.

The superiority of his trading skills is not the explanation Johnson gives for neglecting Kravis's overtures. According to the *Journal*, Johnson thinks Kravis is a "stripper," or a person who buys a company with the aim of selling it off in pieces. That stripping is precisely what he and Shearson plan to do once they own Nabisco seems not to have tempered Johnson's views.

With the stock market recovering and junk bond buyers again hot to trot, the Nabisco deal has a certain inevitability about it, especially in view of what its creators stand to gain. Shearson and Johnson's bid of $75 a share was thought ridiculously low by others on Wall Street; so low, in fact, that the shares immediately traded up to $77 in anticipation of a higher bid. One Wall Street ana-

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A REAFFIRMATION OF PRINCIPLE

We speak as American citizens who wish to reaffirm America's liberal tradition. At our country's founding, the spirit of liberalism suffused the Revolution, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. These principles, thus embodied, have inspired the respect of much of the world.

We regret that the President of the United States has taken the lead in vilifying one of our oldest and noblest traditions. He made sport of "the dreaded L-word" and continues to make "liberal" and "liberalism" terms of opprobrium. We are deeply concerned about the erosion and debasement of American values and American traditions that our country has long cherished.

In the past and at its best, liberalism has sought the institutional defense of decency. Everywhere it has fought for the freedom of individuals to attain their fullest development. It has opposed tyranny in all forms, past and present. Liberal policies require constant scrutiny and sometimes revision. Liberal principles — freedom, tolerance, and the protection of the rights of every citizen — are timeless.

Extremists of the right and of the left have long attacked liberalism as their greatest enemy. In our own time liberal democracies have been crushed by such extremists. Against any encouragement of this tendency in our own country, intentional or not, we feel obliged to speak out. We hope that others will do so as well.

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lyst told me he thought the fair price was $105 a share. If true, there is more than $6 billion of fat in the deal for Shearson and Johnson.

Shareholders, in the end, are going to get less than they deserve. But how much less? If there is any justice in the world, Nabisco should be sold to the highest stripper. If Kravis will pay $15 a share more than Cohen and Johnson, he should have the company. But Cohen is hurt that Kravis would fulfill the promise of capitalism in this way.

No doubt Cohen and Kravis will try to work out their differences. If the two cooperate, it is unlikely some hitherto unannounced third party will spoil the fun. Most, if not all, of the financial institutions able and willing to raise $17 billion for a risky venture are already committed to one side or the other. Morgan Stanley, Merrill Lynch, Drexel Burnham, and Wasserstein & Perella are working for Kravis. American Express (of course) and a Japanese insurance company are working for Cohen. Kravis has offered Cohen a $125 million fee to "join forces" with him. Cohen's initial response was no—$125 million is far less than Cohen stands to gain without Kravis. But Cohen has told Kravis he'd value him as a 50-50 partner. If Kravis can dig down a little more deeply, who knows, perhaps he can salvage a rewarding friendship.

MICHAEL M. LEWIS

Michael M. Lewis is at work on a book about the golden age of investment banking.

America's future ally.

THE AFGHAN AYATOLLAH

AMID THE RUINS of Kandahar, a Communist-held fortress in southern Afghanistan, the rattle of light machine-gun fire is so constant that the sheep, scared away by the crash of a stone, don't flinch from the sound of bullets. The city's population, once 180,000, is down to around 50,000, held hostage by Soviet and Afghan troops who are using the remaining civilians as a shield against the *mujaheddin*. But to no avail; the rebels are poised for an all-out assault. Within months, and maybe weeks, Kandahar—the southernmost bastion of a Russian army since Czar Peter the Great's first southern campaign three centuries ago—will fall.

The Soviet military gained control of Kandahar by saturating the surrounding desert with tens of thousands of land mines, and then, for seven months in 1987, repeatedly bombing the city from the air; much of Kandahar now resembles a vast archaeological site. What the Kremlin has gotten for its exertions is Khe Sanh revisited: control of the airport and five square miles of a city that is surrounded and unceasingly harassed by *mujaheddin* units. Only heavily armed convoys of Soviet and Afghan regime troops run the gauntlet between the two positions. "We could capture Kandahar in 24 hours if we didn't care about civilian casualties," said Haji Abdel Latif, who at 83 is the most revered *mujaheddin* commander in the area. "But we have already given God over a million *shaheedan* [martyrs]. That is more than enough."

The Soviets, hoping that Afghan troops could hold the fort until the troop withdrawal deadline of February 15, had pulled their own troops out of Kandahar in late summer. Within days, however, the *mujaheddin* captured the city's grain silo and several government posts, drawing an untold number of Soviet troops back into the city. The Russians are backed by several thousand soldiers that they claim are drawn from northern Afghanistan. But Pakistan-based observers and a group of Kandahar elders I interviewed asserted that these troops are actually mercenaries from Soviet Central Asia, who roam about the city in gangs, stealing at will from houses and shops, and abducting young boys for menial labor in military posts.

WITH Götterdämmerung approaching for Kandahar's unwelcome occupying troops, American prestige should be at an all-time high here. What one hears instead is a lot of bitterness concerning an aspect of America's Afghan policy that has baffled not only the *mujaheddin*, but Western diplomats as well. It seems that American policymakers have created an impression of spinelessness by allowing Pakistan to promote the ambitions of Gulbudding Hekmatyar, leader of the most radical, fundamentalist, and anti-American of the seven Afghan resistance parties. "I now have grave doubts about America," said Haji Latif. "Of all countries, why does America want to put an Afghan version of Qaddafi or Khomeini in power?"

The root of the problem is this: though U.S. taxpayers foot the bill, the weapons that the *mujaheddin* get are distributed by the government of Pakistan, and specifically by the Interservices Security agency (ISI), Pakistan's version of the CIA. ISI's control of the arms pipeline is one of the many concessions the United States made to Pakistan's late President Zia ul-Haq in exchange for providing the *mujaheddin* with a rear base inside his country. In addition, it was hoped, the arrangement would prevent the United States from becoming entwined in the labyrinth of intra-Afghan guerrilla rivalries. But the distribution ratio worked out by ISI furthered Zia's interests in Afghanistan more than it did America's or even the *mujaheddin*'s. Zia—like the Zia-installed clique still running ISI—always tried to provide Hekmatyar with a disproportionate share of arms and political aid. After all, Hekmatyar used the language of Islamic fundamentalism as a tool of power in much the same fashion as did Zia himself. Hekmatyar was also an ethnic Pukhtun who was not a Pukhtun nationalist, and thus would not stir up Pakistan's own Pukhtun population in the Northwest Frontier Province bordering Afghanistan. But most of all, because Hekmatyar was militarily weak inside Afghanistan, lacking the grass-roots support enjoyed by other resistance

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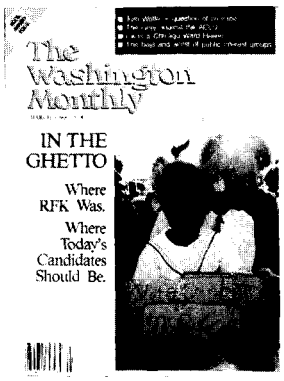

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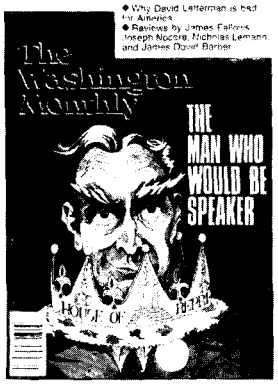

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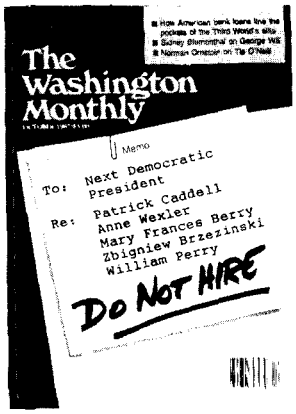

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leaders, Zia could more easily control him.

The Americans played along with this policy, following logic that went something like this: if the Pakistanis think they can impose their will on the Afghans—something neither the British nor the Russians could do—well, let them try; America is certainly not going to get into a public shouting match with Pakistan over an Afghan guerrilla leader who is bound to falter. American officials further rationalized that Hekmatyar's Hizb-i-Islami (Party of Islam) was playing a larger role in the fighting than many gave it credit for. (Most Western relief workers and journalists who have traveled with the *mujaheddin* inside Afghanistan would dispute this. There are even suggestions that rather than fight the Soviets, Hekmatyar has been storing the arms he gets for an eventual battle with other resistance parties once the Communists are defeated.)

Nonetheless, before their deaths in the August 17 plane crash, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Arnold Raphel had been privately urging Zia to effect a more equitable distribution of arms among the *mujaheddin* groups. The one positive side effect of Zia's death, it was supposed, was that Hekmatyar was bound to get less support from Pakistan. But several weeks after the crash, as the fall of Kandahar looked imminent and several *mujaheddin* parties were talking with the Communist governor of the city about a peaceful surrender, the Pakistanis sponsored Hekmatyar on a visit to the Kandahar region that led to the collapse of negotiations. This caused such diverse *mujaheddin* factions as the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan (NIFA), led by Westernized, urban aristocrats, and the peasant fundamentalists of Yunus Khalis's own, less extreme Hizb-i-Islami to start talking in one tongue—against the Americans and the Pakistanis for propping up Hekmatyar just when his star was starting to descend. "Kandahar would fall with a lot less bloodshed if the Pakistanis would just butt out," said an angry NIFA official. "Or if the Americans would just butt in to keep the Pakistanis out." A spokesman for Khalis's Hizb-i-Islami added: "Be sure that Gulbudding Hekmatyar's visit to Kandahar was a disaster and a disgrace." What scares both the moderates and the other fundamentalists is that Hekmatyar has been using his vast quantities of American weapons to "buy" commanders, thereby increasing his field strength.

ONE REASON the Americans are willing to back Hekmatyar is that they, and the Pakistanis, fear a transfer of power in Kandahar to a pro-royalist group like NIFA. Were the Afghan Communists to deliver the city to NIFA, then ex-King Zahir Shah might conceivably be persuaded to return here, an event that would tear the resistance apart, since the 73-year-old king is anathema to all the fundamentalist parties. When Kandahar falls, neither ISI nor the United States wants NIFA and other royalist elements to have any part in the victory. Moreover, American officials know that regardless of who wins the November election in Pakistan, ISI—which, unlike the CIA, boasts a military force all its own—is going to be the single most important factor in the Pakistani political equation for years to come; and U.S. acquiescence on the issue of Hekmatyar will foster a smooth working relationship with ISI.

What gets lost in this preoccupation with Pakistani-American relations is Afghanistan itself, and the real U.S. interests there. If Hekmatyar is in a position of dominance after the Soviet pullout, the nation will be plunged into a bloody civil war; he has no legitimate power base and is detested by other rebel groups. And whoever wins the civil war, the United States will lose; on one side will be Hekmatyar's viscerally anti-American Party of Islam, and on the other side will be an array of rebel groups that will feel betrayed by the United States.

American officials now supporting Pakistani policy may try to console themselves with the knowledge that a Hekmatyar-influenced Afghanistan is the ultimate Soviet nightmare. It is only from Hekmatyar's *mujaheddin* that one hears talk about extending the *jihad* over the Oxus River into heavily Islamic sectors of Soviet territory once all of Afghanistan is liberated. And while the American officials don't want massive civilian deaths when Communist-held Afghan cities start to tumble, they also don't want the Communist defeat obscured by last-minute *mujaheddin* compromises with Soviet-installed Afghans. So if it turns out that Kandahar and Kabul fall amid pitched street fighting, with Russian soldiers "clinging to the helicopters" à la Vietnam, there is going to be a lot of chuckling in Washington and at the American Embassy in Islamabad.

The problem is that while the Soviets richly deserve such a fate, the Afghan people don't.

ROBERT D. KAPLAN

Robert D. Kaplan, author of a recently published book on Ethiopia, is now writing a book on the war in Afghanistan.

CAMPAIGN '88

AROMA OF BULL

MIDWAY THROUGH the week before the week before the election, the George Bush campaign caravan is making its way west. I catch up with it in Detroit, at the end of the day.

It's 11:29 p.m. Most of the members of the bloated, redundant Bush press corps (some 120 persons all told) are in their rooms in the tower of the Westin Renaissance Center Hotel. Sixty stories below, urban ruin twinkles prettily. At 11:30 eyes shift from windows to TV screens. On comes ABC's "Nightline." Ted Koppel asks Michael Dukakis his first question. Unlike Bernard Shaw of CNN, who during the second Bush-Dukakis debate took the subtle, indirect approach of asking Dukakis how he would like it if someone raped and murdered his wife, Koppel goes straight to the root of the problem: How does the candidate respond to

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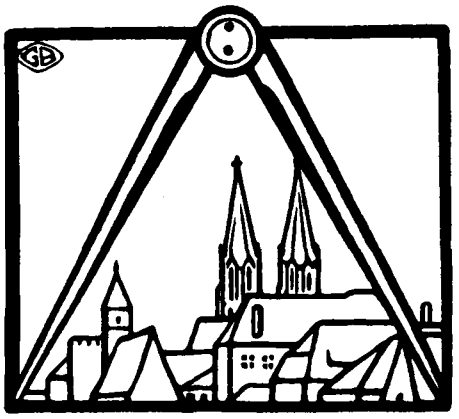
Social Change and Religious Commitment



Few on the secular Left understand the social dimensions of the Gospel, and the way the Catholic bishops, in their recent pastoral letters, placed economic democracy on the national agenda and nuclear disarmament on the nation's conscience. Few have paid much attention to the progressive social witness of Protestants. Few know what Christian activists are doing in Latin America, South Africa, South Korea, and in the ghettoes and barrios of our land. Few realize that the papacy has called for workers' ownership and self-management and that its economic views have acutely irritated apologists for big business. Few have considered the role of believers in the opposition to nuclear weapons and U.S. belligerence in Central America, and in the pro-democratic dissident movements in the East bloc.

We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW — an ecumenical monthly edited by lay Catholics, and written and read not only by Catholics, but by Protestants, Jews, Eastern Orthodox, and even nonbelievers — believe it's time for progressives of all persuasions to inquire into the sources of resilience, energy, and social passion found among religious progressives. We are particularly interested in exploring religious commitments that yield humane social consequences, as exemplified by such giants as St. Francis, Gandhi, Bonhoeffer, Barth, Tawney, Schumacher, Mounier, Buber, Tolstoy, Merton, Dorothy Day, Archbishop Tutu, Lech Walesa, Martin Luther King Jr., Simone Weil, and Archbishop Romero.

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Those who write for us — pathfinders who straddle the fence between the "secular" and "religious" worlds — include such diverse beacons as Christopher Lasch, Walker Percy, Robert N. Bellah, John Lukacs, Henri J.M. Nouwen, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Robert Coles, Michael Lerner, and J.M. Cameron. We bat around a wide variety of issues and defy easy pigeonholing. *Newsweek* has called us "thoughtful and often cheeky," the University of Chicago's Martin E. Marty finds us "lively," and the *Library Journal* has predicted we will "doubtless command increasing attention." If you think it's time to end the isolation of the secular Left from the religious Left, and vice versa, subscribe today!

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the fact that the Bush campaign has been, as Koppel puts it to Dukakis, "kicking you in the groin?"

Dukakis's answer banishes hope he might have learned something from the debate debacle. He ignores the violence of the question. No expression crosses his face. His tone is flat. He speaks of his determination to go on "expressing concerns" about issues. He explains that his plan is to "address the concerns of average Americans." He adds that he and his campaign "will do everything we can to address those concerns."

"What a hopeless wanker," remarks one of the two British correspondents with whom I am watching the show.

To be sure, Dukakis says many sensible things over the next 90 minutes. But he says them in an overpoweringly boring way. The familiarity of the stock answers intensifies their inherent dullness. The drone is all. The word "concerns" continues to get a heavy workout.

As the minutes tick slowly by, our attention turns to the uncanny resemblance between the two men on the screen. They appear to be exactly the same size. They both have enormous round heads topped by low-slung swirls of thick hair. They wear identical looks of thoughtful concern. Their stilted body movements are indistinguishable. Their nasal, resonant voices are interchangeable; if you close your eyes and ignore the content, it's hard to tell which of them is talking. The only difference is that one is blond and the other dark, like Betty and Veronica.

"If only they were wearing dresses," one of the Brits says glumly.

"Yes," says the other. "That would add interest."

IN THE MORNING I notice that the Bush campaign has assumed the gargantuan proportions of a presidential entourage. Secret Service men are everywhere. A huge motorcade is forming up out front. Everyone is consulting thick, pocket-sized schedules full of numbing detail ("3:32 p.m. The VICE PRESIDENT arrives Off-Stage Area and Holds Briefly," etc.). There hasn't been a press conference in ten days. A press aide laughs at my request for an interview. Obviously I'm not going to get within a mile of the guy. It's as if he's already won.

At 10:08 a.m. I am stumbling along one of the walkways that honeycomb the Renaissance Center, trailing Walter Mears of the Associated Press in an attempt to find the temporary press center. I encounter a group of men in suits plus one in a U.S. Olympic Team warm-up jacket and sweatpants. The one in the sweatpants is George Bush. He greets Mears with great friendliness. "You missed my big press availability over there," he says, gesturing vaguely in the direction of the hotel's health spa. "Missed a great opportunity to see me naked." Mears smiles. "Guy from *Newsday* was next to me in the sauna," Bush continues. "*Newsday* guy says, 'I don't want to take advantage, but I have to report to my colleagues. When are you going to have a press conference?' I gave him my 207 press conferences thing. 'We've had 207 press conferences since the campaign began. Once every ten days.' He said, 'You haven't had one in ten days.' I said, 'Hey, look at those numbers.' "

Bush then asks after Mears's wife and, after lingering a few moments longer, lopes off on his way.

An hour later Bush is dressed and reading a speech to the Economic Club of Detroit. The text plugs his proposal for a capital gains tax cut and contains this classic two-sentence non sequitur, this haiku of self-refutation: "Let's cut through the demagoguery. America is No. 1."

After the speech Bush takes a few softball questions that members of the audience have passed to the dais on bits of paper. His answers contain a few of the syntactical nuggets for which I have grown used to panning the stream of his spontaneous talk like an old-time prospector. On the homeless, he admonishes: "Don't drum the private sector out of the homeless business." On drugs, he observes: "Governor Dukakis and I both have position papers on this—mine, many pages."

The goofiness gets more substantive when he tackles a question about whom he would appoint to be secretary of state.

"All through this campaign there have been questions asked about who you might appoint, who you might have in the Cabinet," he says. "I've stayed out of that for two reasons: One, I *think* it may be against the law. I'm not sure about that. That would be somewhat persuasive, I think. 'Cause you cannot—there's a rule about promising appointments and all this. Second, to respond to questions of that nature conveys a sense of overconfidence that I do not feel." This is absurd, of course. Though selling offices is against the law, no law forbids a presidential candidate from saying whom he intends to appoint to any post. Odd that Bush, who has sought both presidential appointments and the power to make them as vigorously as anyone alive, does not know this. Besides, a few minutes earlier he was saying he is intent on "having a drug czar" and on "placing the vice president of the United States in charge of drugs"—which would seem to add up to something along the lines of "promising appointments and all this."

IN THE AFTERNOON we fly to South Dakota for a rally at the Sioux Falls stockyards. Three hundred people are standing around in a makeshift corral. A sign says WELCOME TO SIOUX FALLS STOCKYARDS. There's livestock nearby. The podium is made of hay bales. The site makes for good visuals. Good olifactuals, too. The smell of bullshit, like the sound, is not wholly unpleasant.

Bush gives his stump speech. "The liberals have been all over my case all across this country because of my differences with him on what I think of as family values," he says. "I don't think there's anything wrong with having a voluntary prayer in a public school," he says. "I think it's right that the teachers lead the kids in the Pledge of Allegiance," he says. "There's a wide array of these social issues and values that the liberals don't like to hear about," he says.

Then the whole entourage—a couple of hundred people, a like number of tons of equipment and baggage—goes to Billings, Montana, so that Bush can give essentially the same speech to another rally, this time in a college gym. Eleven Sioux chiefs stand behind him in full feathers. The

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speech yields only a single nugget to the syntax prospector, but it's a glittering one: warming to the issue of gun control, Bush calls himself "a violent opponent" of it. It's dark by the time we get back to the airport, and a vicious wind is howling across the tarmac. Air Force Two gets airborne en route to Tacoma, Washington, after a brief delay occasioned by some fuel vapor that got blown back into the cabin. But after two hours and three tries, the press plane still has not left the ground. Each time it lumbers down the runway, a couple of alarming thwacks can be heard in the left engine and the plane slows and stops. "That's a pressure stall 'cause of the strong crosswinds," the pilot announces laconically and not very reassuringly. The press starts taking votes. We vote to try taking off for Tacoma. Then we vote to forget Tacoma and go directly to California. Then we vote to stay in Billings. All day we've been herded from place to place, given carefully prepared things to read, and fed more frequently than newborns. Now the pilot ignores us and our ridiculous votes. On the fourth try the plane takes off. Our infantilization is complete.

Early the next morning, in Tacoma, Bush accepts the endorsement of the Marine Engineers Beneficial Association, a pro-Reagan union. The proletariat thus gives its noisy blessing to the Bushoisie. The press corps is not in a particularly good mood. Nothing resembling news has come its way on this trip. But now, as Bush blathers on about the need to subsidize the shipping industry, a scuffle breaks out. The reporters brighten up. A respectable-looking young man, his hands cuffed behind him, is being hustled out of the hall by a couple of uniformed cops and a heavy-set plainclothesman in a mud-brown jacket. The young man is bleeding from the nose.

I follow the young man and his escorts outside. "A Bush supporter assaulted a man and I complained about it and I'm gettin' my head bashed against the floor!" the young man is yelling. As reporters pepper the young man with questions, he gives his age (21), occupation (college student), and political affiliation (Democrat). "What's this guy under arrest for, officer?" I ask one of the uniformed cops who is frog-marching the young man toward a paddy wagon. "I have no idea," says the cop. "What's he under arrest for, officer?" I ask the plainclothesman in the brown jacket. He says nothing. "That man, in the brown sports coat!" the young man is yelling. "He was bashing my head against the floor, against the cement floor!" "What's he under arrest for?" I again ask the brown jacket. Brown jacket gives me long look. Finally he says, "Failing to disperse when told to."

On the plane to San Jose, we are told that the young man was arrested for resisting arrest, a favorite ontological puzzler of local law enforcement agencies. A Bush press aide tells us that the young man was a Bush supporter who got his bloody nose from a Dukakis supporter's fist. The sound of clicking keyboards fills the plane as reporters rewrite their leads to include the "violence" that "marred" the rally. "It isn't much of a story, but it'll have to do," a reporter remarks to no one in particular. "At least it's better than these speeches."

Near San Jose Bush tours a Silicon Valley high-tech plant. He wears a white coat. It suits him. He looks like a doctor recommending a pain reliever in a television commercial. He gives his speech under a white tent with a green carpet. The audience sits on white folding chairs. It looks like a Connecticut wedding, except that everyone has on a laminated badge. There are no scuffles.

The trip ends in Los Angeles, with a party at the home of Bob Hope, the great 85-year-old comedian. In the dark, Hope's house blends into his enormous lawn. A podium has been set up. Hope, old and small but in nose and voice still recognizably Hope, mentions the Secret Service. "This afternoon they brought in the dogs to sniff out the bombs. They stopped twice by my joke files." Everybody laughs.

When it's Bush's turn he tries a joke about Hope being old enough to have known Martin Van Buren, but it's not that boffo. So he turns sincere. "I'm not gonna bore you with all the issues," he says. "But Barbara and I do feel good about it. . . . We're not going to be talking on the negative side any more. I'm sorry Clint Eastwood isn't here. Remember how he'd say 'Make my day'? Now my opponent says 'Have a nice vacation' as the prisoners come out of the jails. But now it's gonna be a kinder and gentler finish to this campaign. I do feel good about it."

Everybody's feeling good about it, apparently. Not just George and Barbara, but also Hope and the fabulous galaxy of stars he has assembled for the evening. This is not exactly the brat pack. There they are: Jane Russell, Telly Savalas, Danny Thomas, Esther Williams, Efrem Zimbalist, Morey Amsterdam, Glenn Ford, Pat Boone, Gene Autry, Phyllis Diller, Barbara Eden, Jack Jones, Tony Martin, Cyd Charisse, Robert Mitchum, Donald O'Connor, Don Rickles, Abby Lane, Ruta Lee, and many, many more. And you know what? They look marvelous.

For eight years we've been watching "Death Valley Days," with your host, Ronald Reagan. For a while there some people thought the replacement would probably be something more educational, say a remake of the old PBS series "The Advocates." No way. That got canceled before it ever aired. With George and Barbara heading a kinder, gentler cast, the next four years will be one long episode of "The Love Boat."

HENDRIK HERTZBERG

What is it? What's wrong with it?

ECONOMIC NATIONALISM

IN THE LAST weeks of the campaign, Michael Dukakis and Lloyd Bentsen have started sounding a lot like Richard Gephardt. Bentsen, in his debate with Dan Quayle, made a point of talking tough on trade. Dukakis, visiting a factory in Missouri, spoke gravely of foreign

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takeovers of U.S. industry—only to find that the factory where he was making his speech had been owned by Italians for a decade. And in the last week of October, Dukakis denounced the Reagan administration for acquiescing in Japan's latest refusal to liberalize its imports of rice. Observing these moves, the usual editorial writers have denounced the economic nationalism embraced by Dukakis the one-time free-trader as both desperation politics and an ugly and economically self-defeating brand of nativism.

I disagree. Every nation understandably pursues its own economic national self-interest. In some incarnations, economic nationalism can be good for the nation that practices it but bad for the world economy and the trading system. Yet other forms can be good for both.

THE UNITED STATES has had a tough time sorting out good economic nationalism from bad, for two reasons—diplomacy and ideology. To maintain our diplomatic role as leader of both the Western alliance and the world trading system, we have taken pains to keep our domestic markets open. We do this to set a good example for our trading partners, and to obtain leverage with them on non-trade issues that the United States cares more deeply about. In our European diplomacy, for example, winning support for the U.S. position on the arms talks, on Star Wars, on military bases, on economic links to the U.S.S.R. invariably takes precedence over negotiations with the Common Market about soybeans or machine tools. Likewise, because of our fear of a more geopolitically venturesome Japan, we tend to turn docile whenever divisive trade issues get too testy.

Ideologically, the United States, particularly under the Reagan administration, is far more committed to free markets than any of our trading partners (with the intermittent exception of Margaret Thatcher's Britain). In laissez-faire America, all forms of state intervention tend to be tarred with the same brush. American diplomats have a great deal of difficulty setting coherent trade policy goals to complement our national industrial goals, because we consider industrial goals illegitimate to begin with. As a result, the occasional hard-line we take on trade is usually the purely capricious result of regulatory fallout, litigation, lobbying, happenstance, or concern by the Pentagon about our ability to make products with military applications. Thus, the Reagan administration went to the mat to protect Harley Davidson motorcycles, a nice sentimental remnant of a once thriving motorcycle industry, but took no action at all to keep a U.S. foothold in "high definition" television, which most experts consider the key to the next generation of consumer electronics.

Our reluctance to sort out different forms of economic nationalism baffles our allies (who consider Americans hypocrites and can't understand why we give away babies but battle over bathwater) and erodes our leadership in the commercialization of crucial industries. Yet there are right ways and wrong ways for the United States to pursue economic nationalism. Herewith a brief guide to the various forms, both good and bad:

Pure Protectionism. Under pressure from beleaguered industries, U.S. administrations—both Republican and Democratic—have resorted to a variety of devices to limit imports. Often these are disguised as "voluntary" restraints, as in the case of steel, autos, or textiles. The trouble with these disguised quotas, especially when the quota is on the number of units shipped rather than on dollar values, is that they allow the foreign exporters to raise prices, and to move "upscale" toward the more advanced end of the industry. (Why ship $8,000 Honda Civics when you can ship $22,000 Acuras?) Domestic industry usually takes a free ride on the higher import prices but does not necessarily use the respite to become more productive. Moral: avoid this brand of economic nationalism. If you resort to it at all, do it for very limited periods with a very clear industrial objective in mind and with clear quid pro quos for the domestic industry. Otherwise, everyone loses, with the possible exception of the foreign competitor. Once again, the American reluctance to establish clear industrial goals produces the worst possible outcome—protectionism coupled with declining competitiveness.

Dollar Diplomacy. Should we worry about the burgeoning foreign purchases of U.S. industry and real estate? Yes. But the problem is not that the buyers are foreigners. Foreign investors have been investing in U.S. industry for a long time, just as U.S. investors have been investing overseas. The problem is the abrupt asymmetry in the flow of funds, coupled with the absence of U.S. strategic economic goals. Suddenly foreigners are buying up American firms far faster than Americans are investing overseas. That makes it harder to balance our payment accounts because more and more dividends keep flowing overseas, and it means that American technological leadership will keep eroding.

A related problem is the reason for the abrupt shift in investment flows: the cheap dollar. If our fiscal and monetary policies were not such a mess, the U.S. economy would not be having a fire sale. Basically, we are borrowing money from abroad to pay for consumption that our productivity does not justify, and then paying the bill for the consumption by selling off real assets. If the United States had a budget closer to balance, a higher savings rate, and more productive industry, the dollar would not be so cheap, and the normal balance of U.S. investments abroad and foreign investments here could resume. Is sound fiscal and monetary policy a healthy form of economic nationalism? You bet.

Pentagon Planning. Last month an advisory report to the secretary of defense urged that the Pentagon be put in charge of America's industrial policy. This idea is a telling reductio ad absurdum of the covert industrial policy that the United States has had since World War II. Technological goals for industry and government subsidies are ideologically verboten—except where national defense is concerned. When commercial spillovers occur, as in aircraft production, the ideologues pretend this would have happened even without military research (as if the United States just happens to have a comparative advantage in 747s).

Since the reigning ideology of laissez-faire can't be chal-

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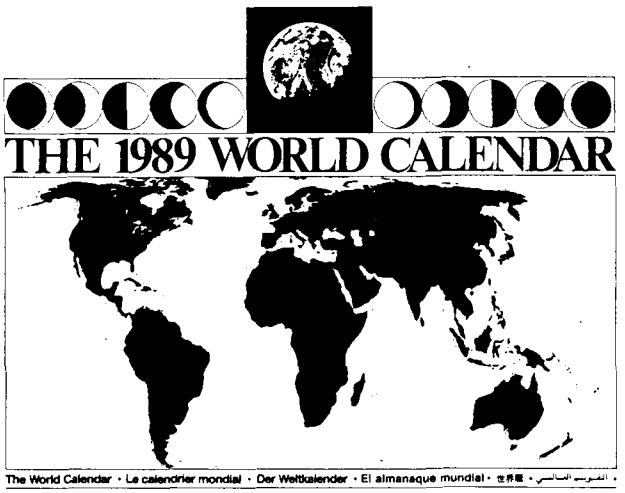

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lenged, the one loophole must be widened. Ergo: put the Pentagon in charge of the economy. That too, of course, is a form of economic nationalism. The problem is that the Pentagon's objectives are seldom, if ever, commercial, and spillovers into the civilian sector occur only some of the time. One hopeful sign is that Sematech, conceived under Pentagon auspices, was born as a civilian creature, with the broader mission of making the United States competitive again in semiconductors. Sematech is an excellent model for future planning efforts, since industry sets the priorities, and industry shares the research costs with government. Other nations, including Japan and the European Community, have their counterparts of Sematech, under the label "pre-competitive research." This is a good form of economic nationalism, one that leads to technological progress.

Rice with Everything. Surprise, surprise. Last week U.S. Trade Representative Clayton Yeutter rejected a formal petition from domestic rice growers seeking immediate access to Japan's $35 billion-a-year rice market. Yeutter said he preferred to settle the issue in the context of the current multilateral trade negotiations, scheduled for completion in 1992. Japan's domestic rice producers said the issue would be settled when hell froze over. Japan takes the position that rice is a special case, with both cultural and national security overtones. Rice is somehow intrinsic to the Japanese national character, rather in the way that automobiles used to define the U.S. national soul. Oops.

The capitulation on rice followed a long-standing pattern: U.S. trade negotiators initially pursue a hard-line, only to be overruled by the State Department, the Pentagon, and the economists, who each have, er, other rice to fry. But there is nothing wrong with demanding reciprocal access to other people's markets. That form of economic nationalism, far from being ugly jingoism, is good for both the United States and for the trading system; it insists that everybody play by the same rules. Nothing fans nativism like letting nations that happen to be supine military allies walk all over us economically.

Debtors Prison. The current American hard-line on Third World debtors is an extreme and destructive form of economic nationalism. It's bad for the trading system because it enforces an economic austerity that reverberates throughout the global economy. It's bad for U.S. exporters because it constricts markets in the Third World for their products. And it's obviously bad for the Third World, where it depresses living standards. About the only people it is good for is American bankers.

Note also the link between narrow financial goals (keep the banks from taking a hit) and the traditional postwar U.S. diplomatic goal of geopolitical supremacy. If the administration relented, and permitted refinancing of the Third World debt on more liberal terms, the main financiers would be Japanese and European, since they—and not we—have the spare capital. So a secondary goal, albeit not a stated one, of the hard-line debt policy is to keep the IMF, the World Bank, and the "Paris Club" of creditor nations under U.S. leadership for another few years. It's a bad bargain. We ought to welcome more Japanese and European refinancing of Third World debt, and on more generous terms, even if it costs the United States political influence.

HERE IS the hardest pill to swallow: adopting a different and healthier brand of economic nationalism means accepting that we have become just another large player in the world economic system, and no longer its benign ruler. Most American leaders schooled in the bipartisan foreign policy consensus, which simply assumed American dominance, are uncomfortable with that shift and unequipped to rise to its challenge. But the change is inevitable. In its own way, Chancellor Helmut Kohl's marketing mission to Moscow represents as epochal a shift in the hegemonic balance as did the advent of OPEC and the assumption by Japan of its new role in the Third World. That shift may not be so bad. After 40 years of playing Atlas, the United States can shed some burdens and share some authority with allies who, after all, also share the same fundamental philosophy about political and economic liberties. In short, we can anticipate the changes in the world economic order and position ourselves to maximize benefits for both the United States and the system, or we can be stunned and confused as the systemic changes roll over us. Either way, the change is coming.

And what of the domestic politics of economic nationalism? The Democrats ought to be better positioned to take advantage of these shifts. Since FDR at least, Democrats have been less worshipful of laissez-faire. If Michael Dukakis is finally willing to admit that the party's heritage of liberalism is something to be proud of, perhaps Democrats can now remember that they are also champions of the mixed economy. Much of "economic nationalism" is simply retuning a mixed economy—the relative roles of market and state—to the new realities of the 1990s. The much maligned trade act of 1988 does precisely that by giving the president more authority to bargain aggressively. In the hands of an administration with a coherent economic strategy, it would be a tool of healthy nationalism.

The Democrats' political comparative advantage is standing up for the economic well-being of the common man and woman, who tend to be buffeted by the anomalies of a pure market economy. Much of the economic insecurity experienced by ordinary people is caused by abrupt economic shifts imported from abroad. A small dose of economic nationalism is indicated here as well. It resonates symbolically as well as in policy terms. That is also a defensible form of nationalism.

Economic nationalism has been criticized as so much raw meat, cynically thrown to an electorate eager to blame foreigners for their economic problems. But until lately, the Dukakis campaign has been mostly vegetable; a little raw meat is just what it needs. By seizing the issue, and defining it carefully, the Democrats can head off far uglier forms of economic nationalism, and turn its healthier version into a balanced political meal for the American electorate.

ROBERT KUTTNER

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Everyone says it's 'Global Spring,' but it may just be Indian Summer.

THE WORLD THE CANDIDATES FORGOT

BY MORTON M. KONDRACKE

THIS IS A precious moment of hope for the world. Vicious wars are ending in the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, Cambodia, and the Sahara, and perhaps in Namibia and Angola. The *contra* war may also be over in Nicaragua, though that's not good for permanent peace or for American interests. The Soviet Union has declared itself bent on domestic reform, not global expansionism, promising an era of reduced East-West tensions and weapons expenditures—perhaps even one of cooperation for the betterment of mankind. Meantime, a democratic tide is sweeping the world. Military dictatorships are out all over Latin America and parts of Asia, and civilian governments are in. There's a yearning for self-expression in Eastern Europe. And Marxism as an economic model is discredited, while liberal capitalism is ascendant.

It's a happy picture—Global Spring—and practically no one seems to doubt that it represents a stable reality. The *Economist* recently depicted many of the world's archantagonists as children playing together in a sandbox. Charles Krauthammer, in a *Time* essay, celebrated a world "After the Cold War is Won." Explicitly or implicitly, both of the U.S. presidential candidates accepted the idea that peace and progress are firmly rooted. George Bush did so actively, claiming it was the result of Reagan administration policies that he would continue. Michael Dukakis sometimes challenged Bush's assertions that America deserved the credit, and he often criticized Reagan's methods, but he didn't dispute the basic assumption that things are going pretty well overseas—even if they are not so hot in America.

There ought to have been more debate about the state of global affairs, provoked either by the candidates themselves or by a probing press. It would not only have been edifying for voters, but it would have forced the next president to think really seriously about what it will take to keep the current moment of global hope alive. Everyone wants democracy and détente to be the wave of the future, but a strong worst case can be made that the wave is about to break—that the next administration will preside over a descent from Global Spring into gloom and chaos.

There are four big dangers. Democracy easily could fail in Latin America and be replaced in various nations by military or Communist dictatorships. The debt bomb could explode, collapsing the world economy. By one of several scenarios, some violent, Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms could end—many Sovietologists think it's likely that he will be toppled from power—and the era of East-West rivalry could resume. And while war seems a distant danger right now, the Middle East remains a caldron of unresolved hostility that could boil over and scald everyone, especially now that both Israel and the Arabs are equipped with missiles and warheads capable of mass destruction.

President Reagan and his followers take pride in proclaiming that while only 40 percent of the people in Latin America enjoyed democratic rule in 1980, more than 90 percent do so now. But many of these democracies are exceedingly fragile. The pioneering first generation of civilian leaders is leaving the scene—Alfonsín in Argentina, Duarte in El Salvador, Sarney in Brazil—and is being replaced by more ordinary politicians, without having resolved deep-seated economic and political problems in these countries.

Practically every new democracy is burdened with enormous debt whose servicing eats up funds that ought to be used for economic development. Chile, no democracy, provides a model for economic progress—through privatization, government fiscal restraint, and rewards for private investment—but this involves an austerity that democracies find politically difficult to sustain.

The danger is that demands for "populist" measures—subsidies, nationalization of banks, public works, state enterprises, debt renunciation, and stimulation of domestic consumption—will prove irresistible. Thereafter, internal and external private investment will cease, capital will flee, joblessness and poverty will increase, there will be political chaos or even insurgencies, and the military will resume control. There's an added danger that because of debt and the lure of drug money, the new dictators might be hostile to the United States, in the pattern of Manuel Noriega.

The country closest to the brink is Peru, which Latin American expert Douglas Payne of Freedom House says may become "the Lebanon of the Andes." President Alan Garcia, a charismatic populist, took over in 1985 and declared that Peru would pay no more than ten percent of its export earnings in debt service, drying up new foreign investment. He sent the country on a consumption spree; inflation is now running at 1,000 percent per year. There are constant coup rumors against the once-popular Garcia. Reportedly he contemplated resigning in September, but was persuaded to stay in office until his term expires in 1990.

Ideally, Garcia would be replaced by the market-oriented democratic conservative movement headed by writer Mario Vargas Llosa, but the leading candidate is Alfonso Barrantes, an avowed Marxist. Meanwhile, the country

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is beset by two leftist guerrilla movements—the Maoist-fanatic Shining Path, which has recently taken up urban terrorism and has begun establishing front groups in universities and unions, and the Castroite Tupac Amaru. If there were a military coup, the new regime might be distinctly unfriendly to the United States. Peru is a major source of coca leaf, and the army gets much of its weaponry and training from the Soviet Union.

All over the hemisphere, the Soviets are actively courting the democrats right now, although they got along perfectly well with several juntas in the old days, too. In a flurry of presidential visits to Moscow and trips by Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze to Latin America over the past five years, the Soviets have been counseling debt renunciation and hemispheric unity separate from the United States. Meanwhile, through Cuba, they have also been supporting guerrilla movements in several countries.

Peru is in the worst shape, but Argentina, Brazil, and Colombia aren't immune from trouble. The leading candidate to replace Argentina's Raul Alfonsín is a militant Peronist, Carlos Menem, who is promising to end debt payments and index wages to inflation (currently running 100 percent per year). In the streets, Menem is referred to as "Rin Tin Tin"—meaning that if he gets in, the military can't be far behind. Colombia is being corrupted from within by drug cartels, and the drug trade is increasingly affecting Brazil, too.

If Peru or another South American country slipped back into dictatorship, the main impact on the United States would be moral. But if El Salvador goes, and perhaps Guatemala and Honduras, it could have a security impact that would reverberate politically in the United States.

A nightmare scenario for El Salvador is all too easy to write: the right-wing ARENA party wins the presidency next March; ARENA's new leader, Alfredo Cristiani, is unable to control death squads associated with his party; the U.S. Congress, under pressure from the same left-wing groups that opposed *contra* aid and already tempted to give up on the expensive effort to prop up Duarte, cuts off military aid to El Salvador; the military stages a coup, and the civil war becomes increasingly brutal, ending in victory for the Communist FMLN and a furious round of political finger-pointing in the United States.

El Salvador then would join Nicaragua and Panama as hostile regimes, Guatemala and Honduras would feel abandoned by the United States and might fall back under military rule. Inevitably there would be pressure in the United States to reconsider handing over full control of the Panama Canal in 1999, further damaging U.S. influence in the hemisphere.

Mexico is a separate danger case—historically more stable, but more important than any other because it is nearby. Incoming President Carlos Salinas wants to follow through on the courageous, painful process of economic restructuring that he began as budget minister, but he will be under severe pressure from left-populists and, having won an unprecedentedly low percentage of the vote in July (officially, 50.6 percent), he may lack the legitimacy to

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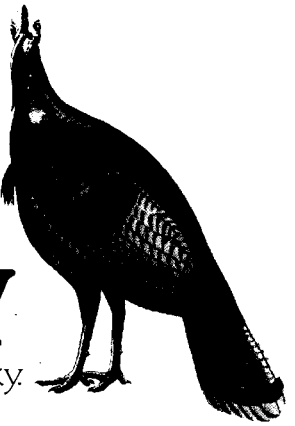

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carry through a tough program. Failure to do so would condemn Mexico to permanent penury and possible revolt sometime in the future.

These are worst-case scenarios that Reagan administration officials such as Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams think will not come to pass. "I'm not saying there will never be another military coup," he said. "It's likely there will be one sometime." But, he said, "there's been a cultural and intellectual change in Latin America. Like everybody else, the Latins now believe in democracy. They've looked at Asia and they believe in market economics. They know from experience what harm extreme-left and extreme-right government does. And they know that the United States won't stand for coups."

Right away, the next president has got to reaffirm the no-coups, no-death-squads message. He should also try to revive *contra* aid to pressure the tottering Sandinista regime into releasing democratic opposition leaders from jail and permitting free political activity. With any luck, the Reagan people will have figured a way to get Noriega out of power by Inauguration Day.

Above all, though, the next president has to address the debt problem in Latin America, which could sink U.S. banks and wreck the world economy if Latin nations can't or won't pay their loans. It's a major failing of the Reagan era that the United States did not fashion a lasting economic base to support the worldwide democratic trend. There was no real debate during the campaign on what to do about debt, but the signals from George Bush are not good. He seems wedded to the Baker plan—named after his presumptive secretary of state, James Baker, and recently reaffirmed by Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady at an IMF meeting in Berlin. The Baker plan merely offers more loans—that is, more debt—to countries that institute capitalist reforms. What's needed is debt reduction.

WORLDWIDE, the automatic one-word answer to the Third World debt problem is "Japan," and so it apparently will be for the Bush administration. One of his top foreign policy advisers said that Bush plans to move immediately to establish a "partnership" with Tokyo on a range of issues including defense, trade, economic aid, and debt, so that Japan begins to bear its share of the burden of protecting world stability.

It's a great idea, and finally in recent years Japan has begun increasing its cooperation on some of these fronts. (Spending on defense and on foreign aid are up by four percent this year, thanks to a booming economy, but still represent only 0.29 percent and 0.98 percent of GNP, respectively.) But Japan's resources—and its willingness to expend them—cannot possibly match the world's needs, which include bankrolling indigent, strategically located countries such as the Philippines, Pakistan, Mexico, and Egypt. Many governments will have to join in, but the United States will be strapped by its own deficit and the need to bail out the thrift industry at an estimated cost of up to $100 billion. So far, the debt-and-development problem lacks a convincing solution.

The next great potential source of chaos in the world is the multiple set of bombs ticking in the East bloc—many of them activated by Mikhail Gorbachev. These include the disruptions inside the Soviet Union brought on by the combination of *perestroika* and *glasnost*—the failure to produce more consumer goods or a cleaner environment, impending price increases, official demands for harder work and less drinking, the loss of job security, and the venting of every kind of complaint, from nationalistic and class antagonisms to criticism of Lenin himself.

SO FAR, Gorbachev has used the failure of his reforms as a lever to oust his conservative enemies, but one day they may either bridle or oust him. Sovietologist Marshall Goldman of Harvard thinks the chances of Gorbachev's long-term success are now less than 50-50, and he points out that those most likely to replace him—the Yegor Ligachev crowd—still openly profess the validity of "class struggle" as the driving force of history. That means a renewed cold war of some sort. We should be able to win it, given Soviet economic decrepitude, but at great cost to our own economy.

Gorbachev also has set turmoil loose in Eastern Europe, creating what Zbigniew Brzezinski describes as a "pre-revolutionary climate" in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia. The combination of ancient hatred of Russia, disgust with communism, high expectations for reform, and impatience with the pace of change that the Soviets and local Communist leaders will allow—all this could cause any one of several Eastern European countries to "blow." One explosion could set off others. If Soviet troops were sent in, it's possible that local forces would fight. History suggests that the West would just stand by and watch in agony, lest intervention set off World War III. But this, too, would dash hopes for détente.

During the presidential campaign, the candidates gave speeches about—though they never really debated—how they would handle a successful Gorbachev. They gave their due to grumpy hard-liners (led by Henry Kissinger) who think that the Soviets have not abandoned their goal of dominating the world, but have merely called time out to repair their economy and have shifted to more subtle tactics of dividing the West. Bush and Dukakis expressed appropriate caution and came up with rival proposals to make sure Gorbachev moves in the right direction—Bush, by promising to continue Reagan's "peace through strength" policy (without, however, saying where he will get the money to pay the defense costs), and Dukakis, by saying he would use Western economic benefits as a strategic carrot (without, however, saying how he would get eager Western European lenders to submit to U.S. discipline).

No one ever asked—and hardly anyone seems to have thought about—what we do if Gorbachev is toppled. There's been a little discussion about whether it's in our interest to help him stay in power. On that point, a consensus seems to have developed that there's not much we can or should do except what's in our objective interest. George Bush, sensibly enough, plans to call an early NATO

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summit to fashion an agreed alliance position on Eastern Europe and conventional arms control, though it's not at all clear what the U.S. position will be. Kissinger has suggested a plan to pull NATO forces back from the East-West divide in return for Soviet troop withdrawals and political arrangements to "Finlandize" Eastern Europe—that is, grant it neutralized independence from Moscow.

In this global springtime, there seems mercifully little chance of a major war anytime soon, but the Middle East would be the logical place to expect it in the long run. The Israelis maintain sufficient military superiority over their enemies to deter attack now, but the Middle East begs for a solution to make war less likely in the future. Top Bush aides say they expect early pressure from the Arabs, Europeans, and the American press for negotiations with the PLO—and they vow to resist it. The ideal solution to the Palestinian dilemma, they say, is for Israel and West Bank residents to reach agreement, with or without King Hussein, on a gradual formula leading to demilitarized self-rule.

That peace, or any peace, seems far off, however, and meanwhile the Arabs—led by Iraq—are equipping themselves with missiles and poison gas. Bush vowed during the campaign to make a worldwide ban on chemical weapons a top priority of his administration, along with controls on missile proliferation. But the verification problems are enormous, and may simply be impossible. "The outbreak of chemical warfare and ballistic missile proliferation are sharp reminders of how easily the nations of the world can turn from the high road and head for the abyss," Bush said in one speech. It was a rare example of either candidate contemplating how things in this world could go horribly awry. To prevent such things from happening, to the extent we can, we all have to think about them a lot more.

And other keys to successful welfare reform.

GOOD JOBS AT BAD WAGES

BY MARY GRAHAM

JACKIE THOMAS leaves her apartment in Southeast Washington every weekday morning at 4:45 a.m. She locks the door behind her and walks a short distance to catch the first of three buses that will get her to her new job one hour and 45 minutes later. She will spend the day putting together circuit boards for computers at a small firm in Silver Spring, Maryland. Jackie is black, a single mother who has been on welfare for 14 years. She dropped out of high school after the tenth grade and had her first child when she was 18. Now she is 32. A long relationship with the father of her three younger children fell apart last year as he got increasingly involved in drugs and did not contribute to the support of the family.

Inside her apartment, her four children—Kenneth, 14, Valerie, 8, Angela, 6, and Donna, 4—are asleep. At 6 a.m. Kenneth gets up, gets dressed, and wakes Donna. An hour later he takes Donna by bus to the church-based daycare program where she will spend the day. If he is lucky, he meets the center director on the bus and she will take Donna with her. That saves Kenneth two bus rides. He returns to the apartment to help Valerie and Angela finish getting ready for school. About 7:50 Jackie Thomas calls to check in, her second call of the morning to the children from her job. "Did you eat your cereal? Do you have your jacket? Do you have your key?" Often, if the children are in a hurry, they will eat breakfast at school. At 8 o'clock, Valerie and Angela join two friends to walk to Simon Elementary School six blocks away. Kenneth leaves a half hour later and walks to Hart Junior High School, a block away from his sisters' elementary school. After school, Valerie and Angela walk home with neighbors' children and let themselves into the empty apartment. Kenneth stays at school until 4 for track. He walks home, drops his books, and goes out to wait for the bus to pick up Donna. He is back home by 5:30, about the time his mother gets home.

Jackie Thomas (not her real name) is proud to have a paycheck instead of a welfare check, even though she is not much better off financially than she was on welfare. "I asked my pastor to pray that I got this job. I haven't missed a day yet, except to take the kids to the eye doctor." But the $5.50 an hour she earns in her relatively good job still leaves her and her children poor. And she worries that the arrangements she has made for her children are fragile. She wonders how long she can keep her Medicaid card. Angela and Valerie have asthma and need shots every week in the spring. If a child is sick, Jackie will have to stay home. Will she lose her job? She reassures herself that the girls like to go to school, even when they have colds. She worries about whether they are safe on the street and in the apartment. And she worries about Kenneth and drugs.

The welfare reform passed in the closing days of the

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100th Congress is based on the belief that there are many welfare recipients like Jackie Thomas—capable and ready to work. The new law requires welfare recipients, almost all of whom are single mothers, to take jobs, go back to school, or enroll in training when their youngest child turns three (or as young as one, if a state chooses). Some states already have been experimenting with workfare under a 1981 law. Technically, even before the latest reform federal law required welfare recipients to start work or training when their youngest child turned six. But because of limited funds, most states have enrolled only a small portion of recipients in such programs.

CAN THE reform work? Operating against it are strong economic currents and circumstances of daily life that have little to do with government policy. Making it work depends on overcoming three prejudices in current welfare thinking: against dead-end jobs, against caseworkers, and against income supplements.

Congress rightly is taking on the hardest cases, acting on the now understood difference between short-term and long-term poverty. About half of recipients get off the rolls within two years on their own. They are using welfare to recover from family crises or other short-term setbacks. The new bill's training and education efforts will concentrate on young mothers who are high school dropouts and/or have little work experience. Long-term recipients are also those most likely to have other intractable problems: drug addiction, crippling lack of confidence, limited ability, or simply a long habit of dependence.

When welfare mothers take their first job, they join America's least supported group: the working poor. In 1988 a single mother cannot support her children on the salary of a full-time entry-level job. Most jobs also lack benefits like health insurance that give a family the security they had on welfare. Nor can entry-level working mothers pay going rates for child care.

Congress is correct, though, to insist that work has value. It makes sense to try to build a bridge from welfare dependence to self-reliance. Jackie Thomas feels stronger now that she is working. She feels she spent too many years just waiting for a welfare check to arrive. She is also providing an example to her children.

Jobs are available for women like Jackie in most parts of the country. Nationally, there is a boom in low-skill, entry-level jobs driven by rapid expansion of service and retail sectors of the economy. Almost a third of all jobs in the Washington area, a prosperous economy, do not require a high school diploma, a study for the Washington Research Center concluded last year.

The new law maintains the policy fiction that work means self-sufficiency. Welfare policy has long been based on the idea that a person who works does not need help from the government. Because of this fiction, employment and training specialists tend to view the plentiful entry-level jobs—part-time or temporary, low-paying, and lacking benefits—as "bad" jobs. But "good" jobs—with good starting salaries, benefits, and a chance to advance—are too scarce. This is a large hidden quandary that federal policymakers have passed on to the states.

The way out of the quandary is to rethink what constitutes a bad job. Andre Williams, manager of a Popeye's fast-food restaurant in Washington's inner city, illustrates the value of bad jobs at bad wages. At Popeye's, as in the rest of the fast-food industry, wages are low, there are few or no benefits, and there is little formal job security or chance to advance. But Williams shows that a smart manager—who himself had started working part-time in high school—can teach the value of work to others. "It's not hard to find help," he said, smiling, "it's hard to find *good* help."

Williams looks for two things: appearance and attitude. People who take pride in the way they look will usually be good workers. After looking prospective employees over, Williams then asks them to talk about themselves and what kind of job they want. Would they work for any manager? If they say it depends on what the manager is like, they might have a bad attitude. Williams explains that he wouldn't put a person with a bad attitude in "the front line" dealing with customers who demand lighter or darker biscuits. "But he might be best at washing dishes." Sometimes just the threat of going "to the back" is enough to improve attitude. He looks for employees who are ready to do any job. The hardest jobs are batter and fry, maintenance, and biscuit-maker. "If they say, 'I don't do floors, I don't do dishes,' I say, 'You don't have a job.' "

Pay is low, $4.30 or $4.75 an hour. A 30-day probation period (during which you won't be fired) if you seem to have a good attitude; two weeks if you don't. Those who prove themselves can join a training program to become a crew chief. "And every assistant manager I have came from the bottom," Williams said. He motivates by threats, encouragement, trying people in different jobs, and figuring out when to draw the line. "I need to be aware of problems, I don't like to be in the dark. If you need a couple days off, I can handle that. Kids come to me and say, 'I am not doing well in school.' I say, 'Have your mother call me. We can work out a weekend schedule.' " The biggest problem is people who don't come to work on time. Williams tells repeat offenders to take a couple of days off without pay and come back when they are ready to work.

WHAT TURNS a dead-end job into the first step in a career? One critical factor is guidance. A realistic path from welfare to work involves moving from job to job, building a track record, fitting in periods of training, coping with unexpected reversals. At each step, there are hundreds of questions. Who will take care of the children and how will they get to school and baby sitters? What if a child gets sick? How will I pay for health care? Will work disqualify me for subsidized housing? What about food stamps? How to get to work?

Probably no bureaucrat has been as buffeted by the winds of social change as the government caseworker. Once applauded as the heart of the welfare system, the caseworker came to be blamed for all of its shortcomings. Many welfare restrictions were thrown out in the 1960s, in

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part under the influence of the welfare rights movement. Caseworkers were thrown out too, accused, along with the rest of the system, of meddling and paternalism. Welfare became a system driven by paperwork rather than by human intervention. Home visits ended. Eligibility workers replaced caseworkers and concentrated on chasing cheaters. Now, caseworkers are returning.

Without guidance, entry-level jobs can amount to taking two steps forward and two steps back over and over again. Jackie Thomas went through this cycle repeatedly. After her first child was born, she cleaned houses, worked as a busboy in a restaurant, and worked in a cafeteria. Eventually, she concluded that she couldn't get better jobs without a degree. When her fourth child was a toddler she enrolled in an 18-week city-funded course to improve her reading and math skills. She finished that and took a further 12-week course. She took the General Education Degree preparatory test but felt she did badly. "I didn't even go back to get the results."

Eventually, she saw a poster about the training available at an organization called Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW). The District of Columbia government contracts with WOW to offer some single mothers on welfare basic education, counseling, child-care assistance, skills training, internships, and job placement. Jackie feels that guidance made the difference for her between repeated failure and a chance to succeed. She is still living in a neighborhood where the trappings of poverty, welfare, and drugs are all around her, but she thinks of herself as part of a community of women who have succeeded in going to work.

THE NEW welfare law begins to reorient welfare from maintenance to change, and introduces the idea that recipients should have obligations in return for benefits. It also recognizes the necessity of child-care and health-care support for working women, and puts the crunch on absent fathers. But the law also leaves devastating gaps. It does not change the economic dilemma for women on welfare. Like the current law, it cuts benefits dollar for dollar as earnings increase, after the first four months on the job. States will provide transitional child-care and health-care benefits with new federal funding. But these end after 12 months of work. There is a requirement to work but no economic incentive to work. There is a stated intention that women with small children (under six) work no more than part time, but there is no economic possibility of supporting a family by working part time.

A single mother on welfare cannot afford to take the kind of job that is likely to be available to her. It may offer valuable work experience. But it does not offer what she needs most at the moment—security for her children and economic support for the family. A full-time job at the minimum wage of $3.35 yields $6,968 a year, not enough to bring a mother and one child out of poverty. To bring a family of four out of poverty, a single mother must earn 60 percent above the minimum wage. If she stays on welfare she supports her children on its cash payments and the skeletal but secure benefits that it provides, including Medicaid. If she stays in school or training, she will continue to receive those benefits. But if she takes the kind of entry-level job that is plentiful, her children lose government-provided benefits after a year and the family loses its protection against catastrophe.

Welfare recipients starting work cannot afford to pay going rates for child care. Most states do not offer subsidized child care for mothers who are working but are still poor. The grandmothers, aunts, and friends who used to help out are more likely to be at work themselves, or may now live in more prosperous neighborhoods. In the enthusiasm for work, it is easy to forget that these are the same children whose lack of supervision and care are criticized in debates about other social problems. The children who fend for themselves when their mothers take jobs may become involved in drugs before they are teenagers. They can be the young victims or young perpetrators of crime. They live in neighborhoods of unusual risk and temptation. Their mothers, required by the new law to enter work or training when the youngest child is three, need to be able to work part of the day or part of the year, as many middle-class mothers do. Even in these work-oriented times, only 27 percent of married mothers work full time, full year, according to David Ellwood of Harvard.

A POLICY that requires work should reward work. Women who are working at or near the minimum wage and are raising children need income subsidies. There are many possibilities, including the maintenance of welfare benefits for working mothers and expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit, a tax provision that supplements income for low-wage workers with children.

State and local governments cannot tackle this problem alone. It will take federal cash. What state and local governments can do that the federal government cannot is provide the practical help that most welfare families need. Only counties and cities have a chance of putting together the patchwork of less demanding jobs, child care, health care, housing, transportation that is different for each family and different at each step. Only states and communities can work on the tortured geography of work and child care. A welfare recipient who lives in the city, does not have a car, and takes the job that is likely to be available in the suburbs may spend three or four hours a day just getting to and from work and child care, as Jackie Thomas does. In rural areas, distances are greater. Local officials who want jobs for welfare recipients can negotiate child-care arrangements with employers desperate for entry-level employees. And they can help create jobs close to home.

Social policy made in lean times is more likely to endure than policy made in rarer, richer times. But it is important to settle for small structures, solidly built, with plans for future additions. Collectively, we know more than we did in the 1930s or the 1960s about who is poor, how poor, for how long, and where. And we know more about *maintaining* people on welfare. But we are still learning how to get people off. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Double Meanings

Another Woman
(Orion)

The Accused
(Paramount)

What Woody Allen is injuring these days is our regard for his intelligence. All his previous films except *Interiors* have obviously had a bright man behind them, no matter what the success of the individual film. Always the undeluded Allen had shrewd perceptions about his society and had attempted, well or less well, to embody them in film. But with *September* and now with *Another Woman*, he has stopped looking at his world. He now looks at films, mostly by Bergman.

Many a good artist has modeled himself on a previous artist. To speak only of film history, consider Truffaut and Renoir, Peckinpah and Ford, Bergman himself and Sjöström. But in each of these cases, the younger artist used his model as a means to explore his own experience, not to imitate the other's experience. I know a woman who was in a famous ballet teacher's class in the year when *The Red Shoes* was first seen. One day a newcomer arrived in the studio and persuaded the teacher to let her join the class. The newcomer then put on a pair of red ballet slippers. These were her only asset. She had seen the film, and she thought that, if she just put on a pair of red shoes in a ballet class, she would dance like Moira Shearer. That woman was an inexperienced nut case: Allen is neither. Still he has taken his red shoes from Bergman films and thinks that merely by putting on the accoutrements he will be a similar artist.

It is not intelligent: to think that, merely by repeatedly mentioning some of the dilemmas of existence, one has confronted them as Bergman does; that the choice of such subjects means that one can disregard organic structure and cumulative drama (which Bergman never disregards); or to think that serious intent demands pompous diction. ("You're capable of such a lack of feeling," a man says to his lover in the middle of a quarrel.) It's not even intelligent to engage Bergman's cinematographer, Sven Nykvist, magical though he is: it seems a pathetic, desperately imitative move.

Above all, it is not intelligent to think, as Allen apparently does, that comedy is categorically a lower form than drama or tragedy and that a serious filmmaker must strive upward to the higher forms. Allen seems to have made his last two films, as he made *Interiors*, because he thought that wit would not fulfill the seriousness in him. This, if true, is a grave misreading of himself and of the dominant national tenor of our time. The most significant American playwrights and screenwriters these days, Shepard and Mamet among them, are incisive, satiric rather than unrelievedly somber. One reason for the international success of Allen's comedies, I believe, is that they are part of that national tenor, authentic to us and fascinating to others. But *Another Woman*, quite aside from its flaws of structure and diction, strives uncomfortably to be dark, "European," rather than indigenous. (A classy musical decor of Satie, Weill, and Mahler—rather than the Gershwin in Allen's past—confirms this urge.) All the items above reflect fundamentally on Allen's intelligence.

The title is meant to be a double entendre. Gena Rowlands plays a woman turning 50 who finds that her new husband is involved with another woman just at the time when, because of her birthday, she feels herself becoming another woman. Of this reasonably interesting proposition Allen makes nothing at all. Portentous devices, like psychoanalytic sessions next door overheard in Rowlands's workroom, flashbacks to various periods in her life, are all just apparatus (mostly Bergman-derived), polished up and used to no affective end. We are meant to be impressed merely by the profundity in Allen's choice of apparatus. Rowlands's inner crisis ends suddenly, she is "at peace," when she reads a new novel in which she is a character. Even this possible theme—a person who feels her life somewhat justified by its realization in an art work—is snapped off quickly with a supposed resonance that is merely a hollow click.

Rowlands's career is a series of earnest efforts, never really successful because she is more earnest than talented. She delivers emotional and reflective *statements*, with fairly appropriate vocal colors and facial expressions, but the all-important transformative element is quite lacking. Here she is further handicapped because she plays a professor of philosophy, and her commonplace, slurred speech fights the image. No, I don't think that all philosophy teachers are eloquent; but if we're told that a woman is a distinguished philosopher and if she speaks as Rowlands does, some explanation is needed.

Allen has once again studded his cast with famous people, not all of them ac-

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Hotel Terminus. Marcel Ophuls's new work lacks focus—it dwells too long on secondary South American episodes—but this documentary about Klaus Barbie is not to be missed. (Reviewed 10/24/88)

The Last Temptation of Christ. Martin Scorsese's first temptation was a bogus novel, of which he made an utterly serious, occasionally moving film. Superlative costumes and photography. (9/12&19/88)

Salaam Bombay! Something more than a look at the street children of Bombay. Though a bit clumsy and distended, the concern of the director, Mira Neir, and the quality of the ten-year-old leading "man" often make it strike home. (11/14/88)

Without a Clue. Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson at a new angle. That angle is promising, but the plodding script doesn't live up to it. Still, Michael Caine and Ben Kingsley, sparkling both, almost compensate. (11/14/88)

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tors. Among the professionals, that excellent actor Ian Holm, the husband, suffers most; he seems puzzled as to why he is present or what he's supposed to provide. The actor who does best is Gene Hackman as a friend who wants Rowlands to marry him instead of Holm. In a few scenes Hackman creates a man hopelessly in love.

The Accused, too, is a title of double meaning. A young waitress is gang-raped in the back room of a tavern. Through two trials and the investigations surrounding them, she comes under almost as much suspicion as the rapists and their pals. In our society, says the film, the rape victim is nearly as much the accused as her assailants.

This theme is fairly well dramatized in Tom Topor's screenplay, although he completely skips a crucial scene. (An essential witness has decided not to testify; then he appears in court and testifies. We never know why he changes.) Cinematically, *The Accused* is notable. The director, Jonathan Kaplan, and the cinematographer, Ralf Bode, have created a film noir in color: many of the shots, even in daylight, suggest the menace of old-time black and white. Kaplan has an eye for the telling angle: when the police cars drive up to the tavern after the crime, the camera pans down and watches from a roadside telephone booth where a call had been made to inform the police. The rape scene, its sound track very well mixed, is a scary Walpurgisnacht.

Kaplan has been less skillful with the casting and directing of his two leading women. Kelly McGillis plays the assistant district attorney in charge—the use of a woman DA gives the film sisterly dimensions—with all the intensity she commands, but it comes out Gena Rowlands. Jodie Foster plays the waitress, a trailer-dwelling, bar-haunting pot smoker, who wears cheap provocative clothes when she goes out and who talks blue. (The film emphasizes that sexy talk and dress in a woman do not equal a permit for sexual attack—a primitive point, perhaps, but it's worth making in this context.) Foster's role is written in clichés of speech and action, and Topor's screenplay doesn't take the extra step—to suggest that she is the victim of those clichés, that they constitute a kind of fate. They remain a screenwriter's clichés, and Foster's performance matches them too well.

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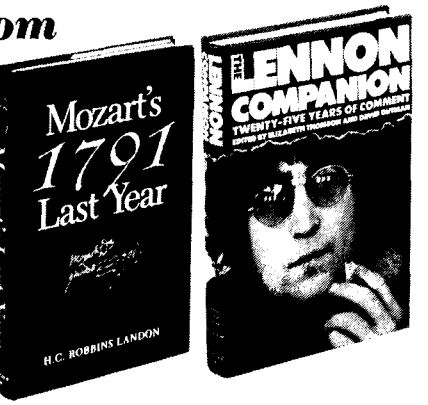

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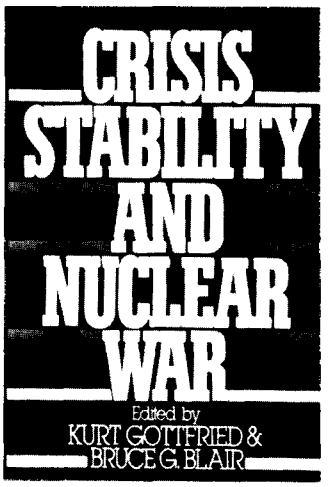

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ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

Yuppies, Past and Present

Unseasonal shifts in the weather this year have been accompanied by unseasonable shifts in the nature of human activity, including the Broadway theater. A season that used to begin in September and run through June now seems to start in December and finish in August. The reason for this is obvious enough: a dearth of available productions. Whereas

Rameau's Nephew
by Denis Diderot
(Classic Stage Company)

Eastern Standard
by Richard Greenberg
(Manhattan Theatre Club)

Broadway producers were once accustomed to developing their plays in summer in preparation for a fall opening, they now spend the autumn months scouting marketable produce from off-Broadway and the resident theaters. A handful of commercial productions are scheduled for late November, all of them transfers from the non-profit theater. But, aside from long-running musical hits, the only stage activity to be found in New York these days is taking place in sites like the Classic Stage Company, the Manhattan Theatre Club, and the New York Public Theater.

Unlike the last two, the Classic Stage Company does not intend its work for transfer; as its name suggests, it is devoted to plays of the past. The CSC has no permanent company at present—along with most non-profit theaters in a financial squeeze, it uses pickup casts for sequential productions. Nevertheless, producing in a modest space on a stringent budget, it has a growing potential to provide the classical theater New York so sorely needs. Under the new leadership of Carey Perloff, the CSC has recently evolved from an amateur Germanic village into a center of rich cultural and intellectual activity. Like most off-Broadway theaters, it has inherited remnants of the audience that used to patronize Broadway's serious plays, which means an audience of advanced age. Yet it is driven by youthful energy, and the recent repertory—Ezra Pound's version of *Electra*, Pinter's *The Birthday Party*, and now Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew*—is a mix of unconventional choices offered in free interpretations.

Rameau's Nephew is a literary anomaly. Written mostly in dialogue, it is essentially a philosophical disquisition on generational conflict between the author (identified as "Moi") and the disreputable nephew ("Lui") of the great French baroque composer Jean Philippe Rameau. Denis Diderot was himself a dramatist, though not a very good one. Paradoxically, it is his non-dramatic works that are earning him a place on the contemporary stage, largely because they are more appealing to the postmodern temperament: first *Jacques La Fataliste*, which Milan Kundera dramatized as *Jacques and his Master*, and now *Rameau's Nephew* (unpublished at his death), which, under the spirited direction of the Romanian Andrei Belgrader, has been adapted by the director and Shelley Berc.

My own company produced *Jacques and his Master* a few years ago, directed by Susan Sontag, and about 15 years ago we made a stab at *Rameau's Nephew*. This is a superior production because it is much more irreverent, the right response to the irreverence at the core of the work. In a passage (sensibly included in the program notes) from *Sincerity and Authenticity*, Lionel Trilling mentions the appeal of the book to Hegel, Marx, and Freud, all of whom found confirmation of their own revolutionary positions in Rameau's bitter anarchism. For the intellectual drama of *Rameau's Nephew* consists of the conflict between two worldviews—more accurately, one worldview and the nihilism of the youthful, venal, self-hating, self-absorbed hedonist who ridicules having any worldviews at all. Rameau is riddled with envy for his more successful uncle. Reduced to eating scraps at other people's tables, he becomes, in Trilling's words, the "victim of an irresistible urge to offend those with whom he wishes to ingratiate himself. And stronger than his desire for self-respect is his appetite for demonstration; his ego . . . finds expression in a compulsive buffoonery, at once inviting shame and achieving shamelessness."

Rameau's credo is "Do your duty somewhat, always praise the boss, and let the world go its own way." Enraged by his own mediocrity, he is indifferent to patriotism, friendship, social obligations, the education of the young. Only money matters—and achieving success. This prescription, familiar enough to us, astonishes the older man, who cannot understand how Rameau could be so "finely attuned to the beauties of music and so deaf to the beauties of morality." In a prophetic passage that no doubt electrified Freud, he concludes that the savage created by Rameau's argument "would in time join the infant's reasoning to the grown man's passion—he would strangle the father and sleep with the mother."

At the CSC, this conflict between civilization and its discontented—between culture and anarchy—proceeds on a small stage decorated with a series of empty portrait frames and a shiny linoleum floor. After some lonely brooding on the risks of an artist outliving his fame, Moi (Nicholas Kepros) confronts his infamous antagonist Lui (Tony Shalhoub), a pseudo-artist with no hope for fame at all. Lui is a disheveled wreck in a disordered wig and torn stockings, unlaced, unbuttoned, lazy, gluttonous, "out of my mind." Possessed of a lacerating rage that Shalhoub often turns on the audience, Lui indulges anything that will help him forget his mediocrity: voracious appetites, derisive pranks, pernicious gossip (he is consoled to know that great men share his sordid habits). Lui has a little artistry, but not enough to appease his self-hatred. His greatest gift is a virtuoso cough, which he rehearses during an extended concert in major and minor keys. For him, the great produce of life is shit, a conviction he illustrates by squatting on the stage in a mock effort at evacuation.

Vaguely bemused by his performance, involuntarily attracted by his nerve, Moi nevertheless takes refuge in moralistic pronouncements: "I believe you have brought the art of debasement to new heights." But Lui does possess a certain relative morality. He never lies when it is in his interest to tell the truth—and he draws negative precepts from the classics (from Molière he learns not to "show off your vices or you'll become an object of ridicule"). Nietzsche might have smiled over Lui's discourse on the need to excel in evil, on the superiority of the great criminal to the virtuous non-entity. Lui is Hobbes's natural man, and in Shalhoub's galvanic performance he becomes a curiously appealing figure—even a poignant one when he describes how Nature made a face when she belched him up ("But I feel!—I feel!").

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The appeal of this character is partly in the way he anticipates so many modern malcontents to come: Dostoyevsky's Underground Man, Camus's Rebel, Gide's Immoralist. Critics will no doubt prefer to compare him to Shaffer's Salieri, though this jaundiced Cherubino, this self-conscious Don Giovanni, behaves more like a character from Mozart's operas. Belgrader and Berc suggest Rameau's modernism with generous—perhaps overgenerous—anachronisms (Lui names the born geniuses as "Caesar, Copernicus, Trump"). Although Kepros, with his honeyed bel canto and basset hound melancholy, is more inclined toward classicism, Shalhoub embodies this modernity by chasing female stagehands, laying his head in the laps of the older women spectators, doing stand-up comedy routines ("Thanks very much—you've been great—drive carefully)." Shalhoub's dark, croaking lassitude movingly personifies the amusement and pain of this prophetic character for whom the attraction of hope, the appeals of the future, represent "nada—zilch—zip—bupkis—not a goddamn thing."

IF *Rameau's Nephew* prophesies the coming of the yuppie, *Eastern Standard* actualizes it. Richard Greenberg's comedy, now playing at the Manhattan Theatre Club, is destined to be a movable commercial success; indeed, success seems to be its animating purpose. The play abuts on two major afflictions of the day—AIDS and homelessness. But *Eastern Standard* bears about the same natural relationship to disease and poverty as silicone does to mammary tissue.

The play is actually a romantic comedy, in the Philip Barry manner, about two couples who cannot express their love for each other until they overcome an obstacle. For the heterosexual couple, the obstacle is a former lover habituated to suicide attempts; for the homosexual couple, it is the disease that one of them has secretly contracted. These problems emerge after a good deal of witty stage chat over cocktails and Perrier, first at a fashionable cocktail lounge and later on the deck of a summer home in Long Island. Making an unlikely appearance at both these venues is a garrulous female derelict with nowhere else to go.

How she gets to the Hamptons—indeed how all the characters, including the cocktail lounge waitress, eventually end up there for the summer—is one of the many artificial twists of plot that make this play seem so contrived. But

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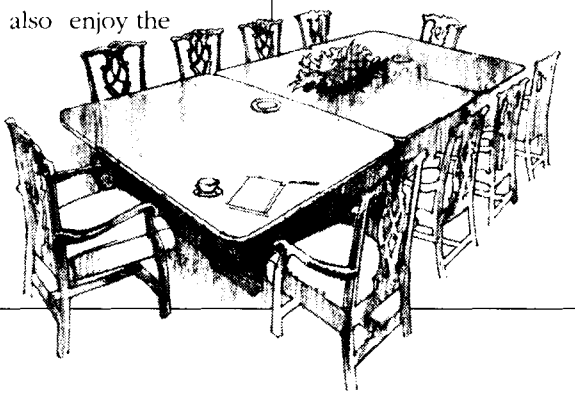

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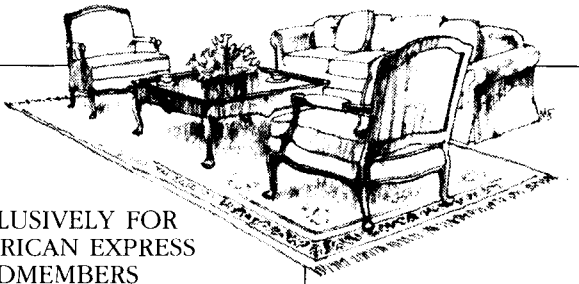

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C O R N E L L

the most contrived thing about *Eastern Standard* is the way it manages to wrinkle its brow over serious issues while using them chiefly as pretexts for resolving romantic relationships. This stunt is engineered partly by softening the afflictions of the characters—the wisecracking derelict has a heart of gold, the infected gay is a cheerful hunk with no trace of his disease—and partly by providing them with trendy professions. Stephen is an architect ("Talent becomes a nightmare when you hate what you're doing with it"). Phoebe is on Wall Street ("I loved crossing my legs in a swivel chair"). Drew is a painter, Peter a TV scriptwriter, Ellen an actress doubling as a waitress, May a bag lady. In the course of the action, Stephen and Phoebe, and Drew and Peter, will meet and fall in love, while Ellen will form a relationship with May. Of all these enameled figures, only Drew will develop any reality, mainly because he's a prize bitch. The rest seem to exist in order to satirize the patronization of the poor, to tidy up the plot, to exercise the author's wit, and (no doubt unconsciously) to demonstrate the profound superficiality of young urban professionals.

Stephen and Phoebe resolve their relationship when he tells her he once attempted suicide himself. Drew, who can't understand why Peter rejects him when he's "slept with the entire free world," is reconciled when Peter admits he's sick with AIDS. *Eastern Standard* concludes with loving embraces and a toast after May has departed with all their possessions and the playwright has skated over every modern affliction except muscular dystrophy. As for the production—representing the efforts of talented people foundering in shallow waters—it meets the play appropriately on its glib and facile terms.

The sad story of an artist's success.

REQUIEM FOR A FEATHERWEIGHT

BY ROBERT HUGHES

A few years ago, an art teacher at Cooper Union in New York showed me the results of a computer survey designed to establish which artists the incoming class of freshmen had heard of. They did not have to describe a work, let alone to discuss it; only to name names. Picasso, as one might expect, topped the list with 61 mentions. Right under him were Michelangelo and van Gogh, with 54; Rembrandt, with 53; and Monet, with 50. The curiosities began lower down. Andy Warhol scored 33, Watteau 1. And Jean-Michel Basquiat, not much older than the freshmen themselves, was recognized by as many of them as Tintoretto and Giacometti; by five times more than Nicholas Poussin or William Blake.

If any artist may be said to have parodied, not just illustrated, the contemporary-art boom of the 1980s, he was Jean-Michel Basquiat, who died of heroin in New York last August at the age of 27. Basquiat was living proof, and not only for the freshmen at Cooper Union, that one could make it straight out of the egg—no waiting. One marveled at such innocence. For the truth about this prodigy was rather less edifying. It was a tale of a small, untrained talent caught in the buzz saw of artworld promotion, absurdly overrated by dealers, collectors, and, no doubt to their future embarrassment, by critics.

This was partly because Basquiat was black. The otherwise monochrome Late American Art Industry felt a need to refresh itself with a touch of the "primitive." There were infinitely better artists than Basquiat who happened to be black, such as the sculptor Martin Puryear, but they did not have to contend with this kind of boom-and-bust success. One would not call it luck; at least not the luck a sane talent would envy. For the very nature of Basquiat's success forced him to repeat himself without a chance of development.

Jean-Michel Basquiat first appeared around 1980 as half of a two-man street-artist team, leaving gnomic graffiti in neat block letters around lower New York under the tag SAMO, which was an acronym for "Same Old Shit." (The "work" on my building in Prince Street read, "SAMO as an antidote to nouveau-

Robert Hughes is the art critic of *Time*. His most recent book is *The Fatal Shore* (Knopf).

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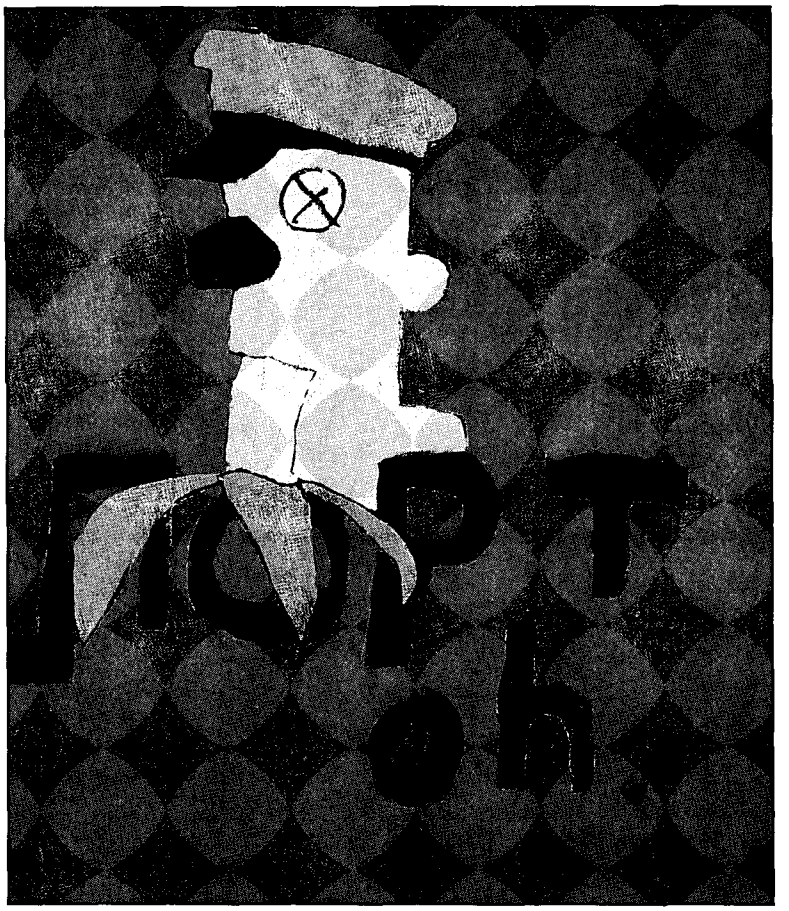
wavo bullshit." It was a claim not without its retrospective ironies.) You couldn't call SAMO a master of aphorism, but his stuff read a little more snappily than most of the spraying and paint-pissing on downtown walls: needling, discontented, detached.

Likewise, Basquiat's paintings, when they appeared in 1981 at P.S. 1, in a sprawling survey called "New York/New Wave," were clearly better than the common run of graffiti art. Though he had dropped out of high school and scarcely set foot in an art school, Basquiat had an instinct for putting things—words, masks, marks, disconnected phrases—on canvas with space between them (rather than just scribbling and void-filling, edge to edge, like most of his street colleagues). This, coupled with his coarse but zappy line, suggested a seed of unformed talent. His use of color was rudimentary and schematic. However desultorily, Basquiat had looked at some museum art—mainly Dubuffets and Picassos, from which his "primitive" conventions were gleaned.

In a saner culture than this one, the 20-year-old Basquiat might have gone off to four years of boot camp in art school, learned some real drawing abilities (as distinct from the pseudo-convulsive notation that was his trademark), and in general, acquired some of the disciplines and skills without which good art cannot be made. But these were the 1980s. And so he became a star.

Graffiti were in fashion in the early '80s, and collectors were ready for a wild child, a curiosity, an urban noble savage—art's answer, perhaps, to the Wolf Boy of Aveyron. Basquiat played the role to the hilt. He had enough distance from it to carry it convincingly, for a time: far from being a street kid, he was in fact an upper-middle-class, private-school boy of Haitian parentage, whose father owned a four-story brownstone in Brooklyn and drove a Mercedes. By 1985, the peak of his career, when he made the cover of the *New York Times Magazine*, his larger paintings were going for $25,000 in the galleries, and sometimes for more at auction.

Deeply wounded by a rift with his father, Basquiat seems to have fixed on celebrity as a substitute for parental esteem. For the last few years of his life, his mentor was the late Andy Warhol. He made worthless "collaborative" paintings with Warhol, lived in Warhol's spare studio on Great Jones Street in downtown Manhattan, and seems to have accepted Warhol as a surrogate father—along with the pale rider's own values about art, money, and fame. It was not the best of humidicribs for an infant artist; but Warhol's friendship certainly kept Basquiat going for a while. What finished him off, after Warhol died, was drugs.



GLASSNOSE, 1987, BY JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT

Like most junkies, Basquiat thought he was invulnerable. To feed the monkey, he had to crank out paintings by the hundred. Wired, he lost whatever capacity for aesthetic reflection he might have had. The result was a run of slapdash pictorial formulas, whose much-discussed "spontaneity" and "energy" were mostly feigned. Far from being the Charlie Parker of SoHo (which was what his promoters claimed), he became its Jessica Savitch.

Basquiat was not ideally lucky in his choice of representatives. His social groom was Henry "Freebie" Geldzahler, who had failed long ago as a writer, curator, and historian, but still wielded influence as a tipster, at least among new collectors. His first dealer, Annina Nosei, kept him in the basement of her gallery turning out canvases (now esteemed as "early Basquiats," to distinguish them from the less sought-after "late Basquiats" of three years later), which she sold before they were dry and sometimes before they were finished. Her successor, for a time, was a disturbed Iranian sleazeball name Tony Shafrazi, who in the '70s had vandalized Picasso's *Guernica* in the Museum of Modern Art by spraying the words "KILL LIES ALL" across it in red. (For some reason the trustees of MOMA chose not to prosecute Shafrazi; he soon re-emerged as a prosperous dealer in graffiti art, a dazzling act of chutzpah.) But Basquiat's unreliability, and his need for the drug money, prevented him from staying long with anyone—certainly not long enough to rig a safety net. When he died, about 35 dealers were said to have been holding a stake in him.

Basquiat's career appealed to a cluster of toxic vulgarities. First, to the racist idea of the black as naïf or as rhythmic innocent, and to the idea of the black artist as "instinctual," outside "mainstream" culture, and therefore not to be judged by it: a wild pet for the recently cultivated white. Second, to a fetish about the infallible freshness of youth, blooming amid the discos of the Downtown Scene. Third, to an obsession with novelty—the husk of what used to be called the avant-garde, now only serving the need for new ephemeral models each year to stoke the market. Fourth, to the slide of art criticism into promotion, and of art into

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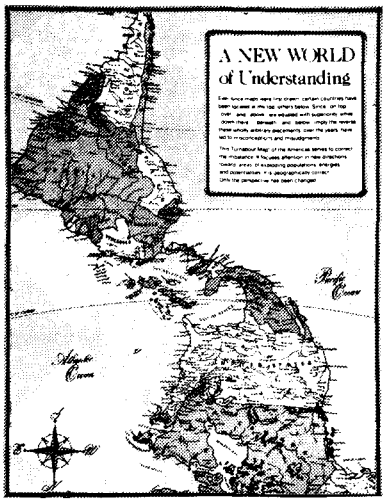

RUN-OF-THE-MILL maps place the U.S. above. Since "upper" is equated with "superior," this has bred misconceptions and mischief. The Turnabout Map of the Americas offers a corrective perspective.

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fashion. Fifth, to the art-investment mania, which abolished the time for reflection on a "hot" artist's actual merits; never were critics and collectors more scared of missing the bus than in the early '80s. And sixth, to the audience's goggling appetite for self-destructive talent (Pollock, Hendrix, Montgomery Clift). All this gunk rolled into a sticky ball around Basquiat's tiny talent and produced a reputation.

THE REPUTATION may survive, or it may not. If it does, it will only show once more, as if further proof were needed, that a perch in the pantheon of the 1980s does not necessarily depend on merit. Basquiat's stardom was waning badly when he died, because the fashion that had raised him up was already tired of him. The urban-graffiti movement that Basquiat had used as a conduit in 1981-83 had no fans left among collectors five years later. Moreover, the "adventurous" collectors who had bought his work in the beginning were now into Neo-geo; the hot young artist with his dreadlocks had been thrust aside by the cool one with his paperback Baudrillard.

But now we have a gush of posthumous Basquiat hype—a codicil, as it were, to the media overkill that surrounded the auction of his mentor Warhol's chairs and cookie jars last spring. There are so many Basquiats floating out there that the only possible strategy for maintaining their value is to romanticize their author, loudly claiming him as a potentially "major" artist, a genius cut off in his first flower.

The *New York Times*, as one might expect, festooned his bier in column inches. "Martyr Without a Cause," ran Peter Schjeldahl's headline in *7 Days*, treating Basquiat as a veritable St. Sebastian, bristling with syringes flung cruelly by the zeitgeist. Comparing him to "a soft young African prince, imperious and wistful," Schjeldahl invoked Cy Twombly and Franz Kline, claimed that Basquiat, like them, "seemed incapable of moving his hand in a way that was uninteresting." Schjeldahl called for "a proper retrospective of his work." Doubtless he will get his wish, given the Whitney Museum's helpless commitment to the trendy and the number of its financial supporters who have been left holding Basquiats whose price needs to be sustained by that "proper retrospective." Then the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles could do it too, because its trustees own lots of Basquiats as well. This is known as Postmodernist Museum Ethics. It's how art history gets made, bub.

Then, in *Vanity Fair*, Anthony Haden-Guest got worked up about "the brilliant, intense life of a most remarkable artist—America's first truly important black painter," as though Jacob Lawrence and others whose brushes Basquiat was scarcely qualified to clean had never lived. And in *New York* magazine, Phoebe Hoban weighed in with a piece to rival Julie Baumgold's treatment of the fraud Arianna Stassinopoulos Huffington three months before: nine full pages of heavy breathing on Basquiat. It was stuffed with exequies, mainly from dealers, though relieved by such flashes of comedy as a cameo appearance by René Ricard of *Artforum*. "Ricard is hysterical. . . . He says the bottle of champagne he planned to pour on Basquiat's grave has exploded." "Jean-Michel was touched by God," Ricard raves. "He was a black saint. There was Martin Luther King, Hagar, Muhammad Ali, and Jean-Michel." *There* spoke the voice of critical detachment, '80s-style.

CONFRONTED BY such puffery, the cynic might conclude that if the *système de la mode* likes anything better than a hot new young artist, it is a dead hot new young artist.

The only thing that brought Basquiat back into the spotlight was his death. Schjeldahl waxed indignant at some unnamed shrugger who wondered, "What else could he have done?" The remark was an appropriation of the famous line about Elvis Presley's death, that it was a shrewd career move. The difference is that, whereas rock 'n' roll would be immeasurably the poorer without Elvis, Basquiat never looked like he was turning into a painter of real quality. His "importance" was merely that of a symptom; it signifies little more than the hysteria of instant reputation that still so grotesquely afflicts American taste. His admirers are like a posse of right-to-lifers, adoring the fetus of a talent and rhapsodizing about what a great man it might have become if only it had lived. Apparently Neo-Expressionism has at last found its Thomas Chatterton—Wordsworth's "marvellous boy," the fame-struck baby poetaster whose name, thanks to his suicide at 18, lives on, while his work remains wholly unread. □

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THE GRIPES OF ROTH

The Facts: A Novelist's Autobiography by Philip Roth

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 195 pp., $17.95)

Philip Roth's strange, rug-pulling little book begins innocently enough with an account of its own origins. An explanation is perhaps necessary, since the common response to the news of a Roth autobiography has been an exasperated, "Hasn't he been writing about himself all along?" Though Roth has furiously protested against the notion that a writer simply dumps his life into his novels, some readers would say that he has actively courted this "misreading." His heroes, after all, were mostly writers and intellectuals emerging from a lower-middle-class Jewish family in Newark: from Roth's background. And the voice he developed for them—argumentative, candidly self-centered, precise in its rushes of pleasure and its burden of resentment—was so irritably alive that many people (and not just beginners in literature) assumed it was Roth's voice. The "mistake" that readers made was a testament to his powers, a mark of his conviction.

Roth has been more inclined to see the error, however, as dull-minded malice, the triviality of a media-dominated literary culture in which any writer's work is quickly attacked by and dissolved into the acid of a hundred journalistically worked-up "facts." In effect, he might say, people were taking his books away from him (he didn't write them, he merely lived them). Perhaps he's right to be sore; and perhaps Americans, secure with data but often baffled by imagination, require the assurance that a writer's life has furnished his fictions. But if so, why not simply leave the literal-minded to their blunders? By addressing the issue yet again, isn't Roth granting the philistines more importance than they deserve?

Roth's intention to unmask himself is particularly surprising given his habits of virtuous reticence. He recently moved back to Manhattan, but for many years he divided his time between London and Connecticut and kept himself out of the public eye when he didn't have a new novel in the stores. As editor of the "Voices from the Other Europe" series for Penguin, he has done valiant, necessary work for the suppressed or insufficiently known writers of the Eastern bloc countries. He has composed one novel after another, at least one of which, *The Ghost Writer* (1979), is a masterpiece, and all of which have impressive sections. The man frequently denounced after *Portnoy's Complaint* as a vulgarian (and denounced by rabbis named Irving Howe and Diana Trilling, as well as the less threatening eminences of Westchester and Shaker Heights) has become an exemplary literary figure, proudly guarded, even rather severe. Book jacket and newspaper photographs reveal a man in his mid-50s both tall and lean, with a gaze almost eaglelike in its fierceness, a high forehead furrowed in attention and remarkably suggestive, in its forceful bulk, of battlements or bunkers. The bad boy of Jewish-American letters, in sum, is now *dignified*, though certainly subject to such eruptions of personal misfortune and unhappiness as could be divined (there we go again) from his more turbulent and obsessive pages.

Roth gives two reasons for the memoir, both grounded in painful recent experience. His mother died in 1981, and recently he has felt a surge of love for his father, now 86 years old and facing death. By writing this book, he sought to recover a time when mother, father, brother, and himself were all together as a family. Second, in the wake of minor surgery in 1987, he suffered a crisis of morale, "a breakdown," as he calls it, and in the remission of the illness began searching for the vital young man that he once was, untransformed into a fictional alter ego. If the breakdown itself was partly caused by the strain of remaking himself as myth in the Nathan Zuckerman books (the *Zuckerman Bound* trilogy and then *The Counterlife*), part of the cure was a return to his own identity, to the core self that was beginning to elude him. "If this manuscript conveys anything, it's my exhaustion with masks, disguises, distortions, and lies."

Reading of the breakdown, one grows wary of a put-on, for this very explanation is embodied in a "letter" addressed to none other than Zuckerman himself, a

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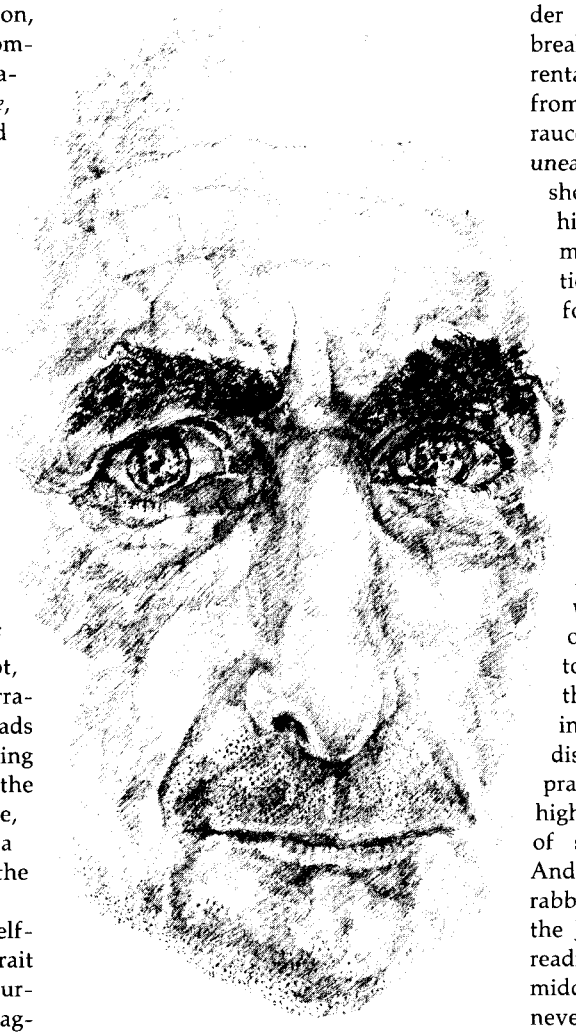
letter in the form of an earnest request for criticism of the memoir. "Is the book any good?" Roth asks, one writer to another, as it were, and all in confidence. As far back as *My Life as a Man* (1974), Roth began setting up parallel mirrors, creating protagonists who were writers and who themselves created alter egos who also wrote, and so on. In *The Counterlife* (1987), he abandoned narrative solidity altogether, reviving characters supposedly dead, allowing characters to review their fictional representation, folding fictions within fictions, becoming, in fact, an earnest writer of "metafiction." In a review of *The Counterlife*, the critic Josh Rubins even wondered whether Roth was not seeking favor with those fashionable academic critics normally excited by such literary experimentalists as John Barth and Gilbert Sorrentino. I would say instead that Roth's formal games emerged as the inevitable result of his dialectical habits of mind, habits that have grown obsessive in recent years. He loves to argue, often with himself. By creating a character who "dies" and is then reborn—forging a new ego out of the unfulfilled longings of the old—he was carrying out the ultimate argument with himself.

Is the "nervous breakdown" part of a new Roth fiction? Well, perhaps not, for the central autobiographical narrative, a mere 150 pages, certainly reads like the writing of a man recovering from something, a man grateful for the recurring and familiar elements in life, the furniture in the living room, a newspaper and hot coffee in the morning.

The note of solidarity and self-reassurance is very strong. The portrait of Roth's parents—his father an insurance salesman and later an office manager, a personality of great stubbornness and masculine strength, his mother a "woman of deep domestic expertise and benign unworldliness"—is marked by the most tender respect. In passing, Roth mentions parental habits of "overdevotion, overprotection, oversurveillance," but he doesn't expand on this charged Portnovian theme. Instead, he writes as if he had said to himself, "Face it. All in all, it was an extraordinarily happy childhood." Not just the sense, but the temperament of his writing, is changed, muted. He offers a ready accession of emotion but without the usual ferocious jokes; ironlike pride without the shafts of aggression.

A loving family; a safe neighborhood in Newark (allowing for occasional incursions of anti-Semitic toughs); orderly streets and an atmosphere of "unpretentious civility" in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, where Roth attended Bucknell . . . it is a narration almost soothing in its procession of harmonies. We had always sensed the presence of a wide streak of seemliness in Roth, but what's new, and



DRAWING BY DAVID SCHORR
FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

surprising, is the streak of solemnity. He discusses, in all seriousness, and with great intelligence, the ramifications of his choosing one fraternity (Jewish) over another (WASP). He refers sagely to the "rowdy testicularity" of boys conducting a panty raid. He reprints the journal entries of his senior-seminar teacher, entries that take note of his eagerness in class discussion. If not quite stuffy, the book, here and there, is dismayingly "mature"—and this is astonishing from a man who had repeatedly exposed the grounding of "maturity" in fear, in the surplus repression derived from the memories of cossack and peasant-haunted grandparents in Russia and Eastern Europe, as well as the specific American Jewish anticipation, even terror, of not being taken seriously by the goyim.

Roth, after all, brought into literature a whole range of derision, comedy, and bad behavior, the natural expression of the American Jewish boy staggering under the benevolent but finally back-breaking load of parental love and parental stricture. As in any sudden break from piety, he spoke in tones at times raucous and profane, producing as much unease as exhilaration. What really shocked was the youthful severity behind the jokes. Irving Howe, in a famous attack in 1972, spoke of "lucidities harsh and grimacing in their overfocus."

Not even the Holocaust, Roth insisted, justified defensiveness in American Jews. For the Jews in America were a success—no, they were more than a success, they were astoundingly adept at being Americans. They could take the heat—or should be able to take it. Anyone who pretended that Jews were exempt from the normal range of human vanities, or who attempted to deflate every act of criticism with the charge that the author was "playing into the hands of the gentiles" or displaying "Jewish self-hatred," was practicing what Roth once called, in his high anti-rabbinical mode, the "oratory of self-congratulation and self-pity." And we can add something to this: the rabbis attacking him for being bad for the Jews, or bad *to* the Jews, were not reading him well. His satires of lower-middle-class and middle-class Jews were never as hostile or cold as his more umbrageous critics said. Mixed in among *Portnoy's* pages of outlandish burlesque were scenes of family life both lyrical and painfully tender. *Portnoy* may have begun (as Roth admits in *The Facts*) as a living-room entertainment for friends, but it ended as literature.

In his new, sober manner, Roth is still casting off rabbis. From *The Facts*, there is this memory of the restless Leslie Street boy at Hebrew school:

> In the clash between the anguished solemnity communicated to us by the mysterious bee-buzz of synagogue prayer and the irreverence implicit in the spirit of animated mischievousness that manifested itself al-

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most daily in the little upstairs classroom of the *shul*, I recognized something far more "Jewish" than I ever did in the never-never land stories of Jewish tents in Jewish deserts inhabited by Jews conspicuously lacking local last names like Ginsky, Nusbaum, and Strulowitz.

In such passages Roth speaks for American Jews who have forged an identity as Jews out of individual will, experience, and perception—out of juxtaposition and irony, if need be. Where Howe went wrong was in assuming that Roth was telling assimilated young Jews in the suburbs that they could simply let go—let go of the Jewish tradition, of Europe, of literature—and become guilt-free swingers, soaring "to the horizons of pleasure." Nothing remotely resembling that injunction has emerged from Roth's books over the last 20 years. In the clash between "anguished solemnity" and "irreverence," Roth has found a Jewish identity as tormented, burdensome, and dangerous as any that a literary moralist could wish for. Roth has long fought rabbis in order to become a greater rabbi himself, but he's a rabbi of doubt, of ceaseless assertion and self-criticism.

THE SECONDARY meaning of the Hebrew-school passage is that it's the boy's intuition that is correct. Perhaps more than any American writer since Mark Twain, Roth has used the perceptions of boyhood and young manhood as the testing ground of truth. If a boy finds *shul* musty and boring, that's the final judgment on the matter. In Roth's fiction, a good part of the comedy descends in spirit from the gross hilarities of the adolescent kibitzers sitting around Leslie Street on a long Friday night, razzing the neighborhood. Even in *The Counterlife*, written when Roth was over 50, many passages take their coloring from a young man's moods, with their inevitable subjectivity and rancor, their insistence on logic, their exulting in the primacy of the erotic—the erotic as a moral force—as well as a bristling defiance before local authorities of all sorts. Roth is a master of self-serving (and often self-satirizing) tirade.

The need to be right, to be justified, and for others to see that he was right, was very strong in his early work. In recent years it has abated somewhat; certainly the Zuckerman books have been filled with the most severe and thorough criticism of their hero's motives and ethics—the clash of opposing viewpoints, rather than the predominance of his own, now fascinates Roth. But still, even if the Roth protagonist no longer has to win, it's essential to his identity that he never stop pressing his case, that he appeal to an ideal of reason. I argue, therefore I am.

Temporarily thrown off kilter by his neurotic problems, Roth appears to have lost touch with this, his characteristic voice. In *The Facts*, he settles for describing its development. He ridicules his early "mournful" and "genteel" undergraduate attempts at fiction, stories of "sensitive young men crushed by coarse life" composed in imitation of Salinger and Capote, with a self-pitying admixture of Thomas Wolfe. "I wanted to demonstrate that I was 'compassionate,' a totally harmless person." Later, mocking the editor of the campus paper at Bucknell, he finds his own true style, falling into his lifelong mode of aggressive joking, "transforming indignation into performance."

THE NARRATIVE section of *The Facts* chronicles the large and small acts of rebellion that built indignation into the principal armature of a distinguished writer: the leave-takings from his father, his community, his college fraternity, and eventually from stable and happy relations with women. He traces his miserable affair, in his 20s, with the unfortunate "Josie" (her name has been changed—she also appeared, almost untransformed, as Maureen Johnson in *My Life as a Man*), the Midwestern gentile girl who claimed to be abused, then victimized, and in whose supposed dire straits he found an irresistible challenge to his own complacencies. After describing the psychopathic Josie, who bullied and shamed him, eventually tricking him into marriage, he ridicules the naïveté he once displayed in finding her craziness morally seductive. Suddenly Roth's normal urgency comes back into the book; he still hates his former wife.

Yet a reprieve awaits Josie; she receives from Roth an egotistical redemption. Her bizarre acts he now regards as a kind of fiction, a manic inventiveness that expanded his notion of the laws of probability and proportion. "Without doubt she was my worst enemy ever, but, alas, she was also nothing less than the greatest creative writing teacher of them all, specialist par excellence in the aesthetics of extremist fiction." Josie, along with the outsized follies of Lyndon Johnson and the general loosening of manners in the '60s, led him to write and publish *Portnoy*, a momentous event that he represents as the final break with the norms of the tribe. And the narrative ends there.

Zuckerman now weighs in. He complains about some of the things that I've complained about, but he's far more eloquent. He's a better and harsher reader of Philip Roth than anyone else could be, accusing him of cowardice, evasion, lies. "You try to pass off here as frankness what looks to me like the dance of the seven veils.... As for characterization, you, Roth, are the least completely rendered of all your protagonists." He teases him for finally caving in to Jewish readers who have wanted to hear, after three decades, that his "parents had a good son who loved them.... Where's the anger?"

On and on he goes, and everything he says is unanswerable. So what kind of strange, devouring animal is Roth? He not only eats his young, he lays out the bones for our examination afterward.

Vint Lawrence

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The book turns out to be a didactic stunt, a convoluted demonstration of the primacy of fiction. Roth has constructed an elaborate double irony. First he sets out to confound the literal-minded. Art is not life: as a boy, he was tame, not wild; he loved his parents; his father did not die cursing him (as Zuckerman's did) for betraying the family with a scandalous book; indeed, he did not die at all, etc. In his books, he has changed, altered, reversed the events of his life. But then he shows that "the facts" are no longer recoverable in their full force; fiction has altered them into weak echoes of themselves. Indeed, reading about Josie and other men and women from his life, we find ourselves in a bizarre state of teleological complacency: what Roth tells us could not have *not* happened, since some version of it has already appeared in his books. We know the design. What actually happened is a feeble gloss.

As Zuckerman says, autobiography is a manipulative form; the author either conceals things to protect people, or he reconstructs his life into a too orderly fable, asking us to judge him (that is, to approve him) ethically. Marshaled nude, unclothed, untransformed, the facts appear relatively uninteresting. Only in art—and fiction—is experience realized in all its ambiguity, stress, anguish, and mess. So the novels *are* self-portraits, but not in the way that the dull-minded imagine. What Roth has put in them is not so much events and people as the fullness of his temperament. *The Facts* is subtitled *A Novelist's Autobiography*, but the clear point of the book, with its intentionally inadequate narrative, is that a novelist cannot write an autobiography. This novelist, at any rate, is almost haplessly condemned to fiction.

In his interviews and counterattacks, Roth has often taken a hand in helping read us his books. Sometimes too active a hand: one problem with *The Counterlife* is that Roth keeps cueing us on how to interpret this experiment as it goes along. Roth surrounds us on all sides, crowding us, telling us what lessons to draw. The book may be play, but it isn't playful play. *The Facts* is also a work more purposive than playful; it deconstructs the genre of autobiography, and though the exercise is fascinating to anyone with an interest in Roth, it's still a negative accomplishment, like building a ship you know will sink in order to prove the weakness of the hull.

Has Roth exhausted the possibilities of autobiographical fiction? In *The Facts*, he seems to admit as much: Zuckerman's charming English wife, Maria, who gets to read Roth's narrative, complains that the man who created her and her husband is a self-obsessed bore, a monomaniacal artist who relentlessly turns everything that happens to him into an overly coherent pattern ("Existence isn't always crying out for the intervention of a novelist. Sometimes it's crying out to be lived"). Yet despite this self-injunction to embrace life for its own sake, Roth suggests at the end, in a mind-bending twist I shall not reveal, that having surmounted his crisis, he is ready to write about his alter ego again—ready to re-create himself as fiction.

With a heavy sigh, Roth's readers may say, So be it! The Zuckerman books are a brilliant, arduous, and relentlessly ironic investigation of the relations of art and life, perhaps the most brilliant we've had in American literature since the stories of Henry James. But is it ungrateful to wish that Roth will now let other sensibilities, not ironic in derivation, dominate his next Zuckerman book? In the past, when he has given the other characters air to breathe, they have burned the oxygen with their intensity. The crazy, obscene Czechs in "The Prague Orgy" (the novella that serves as an epilogue to *Zuckerman Bound*) and the enraged or sorrowful Israelis in the "Judea" chapter of *The Counterlife* have provided the most exhilarating moment of Roth's recent fiction. He may have taken his own discourse to the ultimate stage of self-consciousness, but one hopes he's still willing to let other voices go free.

DAVID DENBY

David Denby is the film critic of *New York* magazine.

AS THE WORLD TURNS

Perilous Statecraft: An Insider's Account of the Iran-Contra Affair by Michael A. Ledeen

(Scribner, 307 pp., $19.95)

The Iranian Triangle: The Untold Story of Israel's Role in the Iran-Contra Affair by Samuel Segev

(Free Press, 340 pp., $22.50)

Inside the National Security Council by Constantine C. Menges

(Simon and Schuster, 418 pp., $19.95)

The Presidency and the Management of National Security by Carnes Lord

(Free Press, 207 pp., $22.50)

To say that you have served on the staff of the National Security Council in the administration of Ronald Reagan raises eyebrows. The most polite comment, "On whose watch?" is fair. Six assistants for national security have worked in the White House since 1981, a record by any count. Richard Allen served for the first year. William Clark lasted nearly two years, until late 1983. Robert McFarlane, Clark's deputy, held the job until he resigned in December 1985, and was replaced by his deputy, John Poindexter. Poindexter resigned a year later. Frank Carlucci swept away the damage of Iran-*contra* but within a year had been promoted to secretary of defense. His deputy,

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Gen. Colin Powell, now holds the job.

I worked for the first three, and was a close colleague of the fourth. Nothing I had done before, in or out of Washington, prepared me for my ride on the NSC roller coaster. The first of the Reagan years was tough; the NSC had been "downgraded" to avoid the turf battles with the State Department that were notorious in the Kissinger-Rogers, Brzezinski-Vance days. "Downgrading," however, only exacerbated the rivalry between the Cabinet barons and the White House. There was usually bad blood, and NSC staffers were acutely conscious of weakness. This changed when Clark took over. He had the most important attribute of power in Washington: direct, "real time" access to the president. The senior NSC staff were "upgraded." For nearly two years we were frequent visitors to the Oval Office to brief the president.

MCFARLANE, my third boss, knew his way around the bureaucratic mine fields. He also understood the centrality of the U.S.-Soviet relationship to all of foreign policy. In time his important role in founding the new relationship with the Soviets will be better appreciated. Now, of course, he is best known for his role in the Iran scandal. McFarlane was one of the most decent and intelligent people I met in government, but he was forever an enigma. Very few of us knew what this quiet, somber, secretive man was really thinking, or for that matter, what he was really doing.

Because of McFarlane's special interest in the Middle East, I sometimes felt "cut out" of decisions about "my" area. But feeling cut out is a daily hazard for people in government, most of whom have considerable, if fragile, egos. The offices of the NSC are in the Old Executive Office building, but the adviser and his immediate entourage work in the west wing of the White House. It is easy, in other words, to become mildly paranoid, especially if the boss has met with the secretary of state to discuss something to do with "your" area and you have not been debriefed. The slights, I learned, were usually unintentional, and were owed to the most pressing problem facing the NSC adviser: the spectacular size of the workload.

Getting the attention of the boss at the NSC is a regular preoccupation. One trick in my day was to put red tags on memos that were considered priority. But this led, naturally, to double red tags, and occasionally to triple red tags. Soon all the folders were covered in red tags. Another technique was to use the staff meetings to bring up problems, in the hope of getting some counsel there and then. But unless you were the point man for an on-going crisis, in which case the boss called *you*, life was a constant, Darwinian struggle to be noticed.

EVERY DAY began with three essential items: the overnight cable traffic to and from the Middle East; the National Intelligence Daily (NID) prepared for senior officials by the CIA; and, perhaps most important, the review of the daily press, including USIA translations of the Mideast press, especially the highly informed Israeli papers. This reading was done before 7:30 each morning, when we would have the senior staff meeting with the NSC adviser. When I returned to my office, I could start on the pile of incoming memoranda, on the sheets of raw intelligence data, on the interagency studies of everything under the sun, on the White House mail, on the memos from outsiders trying to get their pet ideas passed to the president or to the national security adviser, and finally on my personal mail, much of it from bigots and cranks. (The Middle East desk attracts more than its fair share of the latter.) Throughout the day, of course, the cables, and other material, never stopped coming. I doubt that I ever got through more than a quarter of it.

For the NSC adviser, the situation was worse. McFarlane, for example, was in his office by 7 or 7:15 in the morning (and not out of it until 8 or 9 in the evening). His day was essentially out of his control. The 7:30 staff meeting followed by the 8 o'clock senior White House staff meeting upstairs; then a few moments for the CIA briefing before the briefing of the president; then ten minutes, perhaps, with Shultz or Weinberger or Baker; then the long list of calls to be returned (Casey, urgent; Regan, urgent; the Egyptian ambassador, very urgent); then a scheduled meeting with the press; then up to the Oval Office with a foreign leader; then lunch with same, followed by the "departure statement" and the background briefing of the press; then more calls to, say, senators agitated about today's piece in the *Post*; then a flash cable from the Situation Room, telling of a coup, or a hostage taken; then a call from the White House Press Office that "CBS is going with a story about Lebanon. What should we say?";

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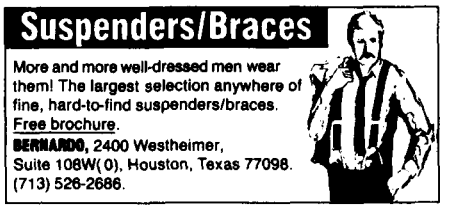
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then more meetings, and up once again to brief the president for next week's trip to Mexico. And that is a quiet day, a day free of war and immediate crisis. (Meanwhile, outside the office, clicking his heels, sits a distinguished member of the president's inner circle who has been waiting weeks for an appointment; or an ambassador; or even, looking covert, Michael Ledeen.) At 6:30 it's time to change for the black-tie embassy dinner. And dinner is followed by the red tags.

With this schedule, there was little time for serious thought, serious reading, serious discussion. With this particular president, things were complicated still more. A president with strong subliminal opinions and excellent political sense, but with little knowledge of the wide world and few operational skills, was not an easy taskmaster. Still, briefing him was interesting. Always polite and attentive, Reagan would rarely interrupt a presentation, no matter how complicated. Nor would he ask questions of clarification. Instead he would often volunteer his own somewhat homespun opinions on the subject at hand. When he did speak up and express strong feelings for an issue, it would register vividly with all present. But mostly you left without knowing where Reagan stood on the details of policy.

MICHAEL LEDEEN and Constantine Menges have harsh things to say about their experiences of the NSC under Reagan. When they stick to describing the bureaucratic jungle, they are on target. But their books are not exactly disinterested examinations of the difficulties of foreign policy. They have agendas of their own, and are animated by a strong desire to settle scores with former colleagues.

Ledeen achieved a certain fame for his role in the "arms for hostages" deal with Iran. He has the distinction of having brought Manucher Ghorbanifar to the attention of the White House. Ledeen helped broker the first arms-for-hostage swap in August and September 1985, when Israel (with White House permission) provided TOW missiles to Iran and the Rev. Benjamin Weir was sprung from captivity. Many vicious things have been said about Ledeen, about everything from his scholarship to his business deals to his connections with the Israelis; it has even been suggested that he took a cut from the sale of the missiles. Most of this is silly, and sour grapes. I believe that Ledeen became involved in the deal with Iran out of a sincerely held view of American strategy in the Great Game. He was anxious, naturally, to testify publicly when Congress held its televised hearings in the summer of 1987. Unlike other actors in the drama, however, Ledeen was denied his moment before the cameras. He feels bitter; I can't blame him. And so he wrote a book, at the urging of his lawyer, R. James Woolsey, to whom it is dedicated. "Shrewd, wise, and spellbinding," says Peter Ueberroth on the cover of Ledeen's book. The endorsement should make it clear that *Perilous Statecraft* was not written with the graduate student in mind.

The dust cover tells us breathlessly that Michael Ledeen "was the only American present during the top-secret talks with Khomeini's regime." And this is the same Ledeen, we are told, who as "Special Adviser to the Secretary of State, alone went through the Lebanese war zone to observe." These promotional phrases illustrate nicely the problem with Ledeen's account. It is true that Ledeen did negotiate with Khomeini's men; but surely the most famous top-secret meeting was with McFarlane, in Tehran in May 1986, when Oliver North, not Michael Ledeen, was in attendance. As for him going "alone through the Lebanese war zone," when did he go, and what did he observe? We are not told in the book. Was he on the front line, say, in the early days of June 1982, when the Israeli tanks rumbled toward Beirut? Alone? Surely other Americans were there at the time—say, the ubiquitous Philip Habib.

Ledeen believes Iran-*contra* was a terrible mistake. He's right. Yet he still insists that the original idea of selling arms to the Iranians for hostages was a risk worth taking: for, unlike most of the timid professionals in the CIA or at State, he truly understands the dark requirements of counterterrorism and the grim realities of the Middle East. It was Ledeen's good fortune that the biggest "mistakes" occurred after he was removed from the policy loop in November 1985. But he is unable to acknowledge any culpability at all for the disaster in which he played an important role. Instead he feels it is fair for him to trash virtually everyone involved in the Iran caper with the exceptions of himself, Ghorbanifar, and David Kimche.

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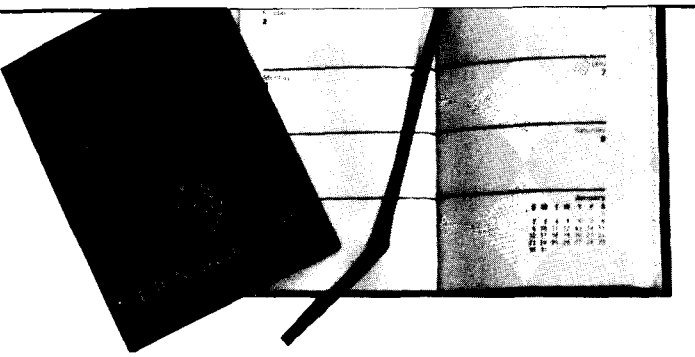
Ledeen seems to consider himself a strategist, almost in the grand manner. But his book is most superficial when it turns to the strategic situation in the Gulf. There are only glancing references to the Iran-Iraq war, and there is no serious analysis of the strategic issues, or the tactical military balance, that existed in the Persian Gulf between 1985 and 1986. The Iranians were hurting, to be sure; but they were, by all accounts, in a much stronger military position than Iraq. The American arms embargo known as Operation Staunch was animated by the fear that Iraq, not Iran, would collapse, that Khomeini's armies, not Hussein's, would find themselves in a position to threaten the Arab Gulf countries.

LEDEEN CLAIMS to be an insider. In reality, he is the consummate outsider with occasional access. His diplomatic demimonde is studded with the likes of Ghorbanifar, Schwimmer, Nimrodi, secret missions, quiet meetings in European hotels, late-night gatherings in the White House. Not that there is anything intrinsically wrong, of course, with the White House making use of outside talent. Sometimes the free-lancers really do help. Thus the best section of Ledeen's book deals with the *Achille Lauro* affair, and with his own role in it. When American fighters were escorting the Egyptian plane and wished to land in Italy, Ledeen was brought into the White House to speak Italian with Prime Minister Craxi (an old pal, he says). Ledeen makes it sound exciting. Crises were always the most exciting times at the NSC.

But for every exciting passage, there are many more nasty ones. Ledeen's rage at the foreign policy establishment, at the CIA, the State Department, Congress, is not new; his previous book, *Grave New World*, denounced them, too. But now he aims at more targets: Deaver, the Bakers (Jim and Howard), McFarlane, North, Poindexter, Secord, Nir, the "Wise Men" who made up the Tower Commission (John Tower, Brent Scowcroft, and Edmund Muskie), and Nancy Reagan. Certainly his most egregious charge comes in his claim that McFarlane was suffering from a mental breakdown for over a year before his suicide attempt in February 1987, and that this may explain why the Iran business got out of hand. Ledeen writes about McFarlane's "profound inner turmoil," his "sense of honor," "strong religious convictions,"



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his "serious psychological crisis."

In his preface Ledeen claims that in researching his book he talked to as many Iran-*contra* people as he could. "A few declined, of whom the most important are North, Nir, and Secord—and most of the investigators of the Tower Commission and the congressional committees." The implication is that he must have talked to McFarlane, who was surely the most important player of all. I called McFarlane. He told me Ledeen never interviewed him at all, that they talked only once after the scandal, briefly on a street corner, when Ledeen complained that he was being accused of making money from the deal. It appears, then, that the ever-confident Ledeen is not only a counterterrorism expert and a diplomatic historian, but a self-styled shrink, too.

As for Ledeen's hero Ghorbanifar, Samuel Segev's *The Iranian Triangle* has more to teach. Segev appears to have enjoyed good access to Israeli sources, and he fills in some significant gaps on Israeli relations with Iran; but most interesting, Segev adds to the long list of reasons why Ghorbanifar's name arouses such ire. In 1980, Segev writes, Ghorbanifar ingratiated himself with exile forces in Paris led by Shahpour Bakhtiar, and became ordnance chief for a military operation to topple Khomeini—whereupon he gave the names of many officers in the conspiracy to Khomeini. More than 30 of them were executed. This was Ghorbanifar's method of rehabilitating himself in Tehran, and the beginnings of his role as the go-between.

CONSTANTINE MENGES joined the NSC in the fall of 1983. He came from the CIA, where, for a period, he was the national intelligence officer for Latin America. After eight months at the White House, he made himself so unpopular with senior NSC staff, especially McFarlane and Poindexter, that he was considered persona non grata. The State Department made it clear that they would prefer not to have him accompany Shultz on trips to Central America. In 1985 he was "moved up," that is, he was removed from direct control of Latin American affairs and put in charge of public information. He lasted another year before Poindexter fired him in May 1986.

As someone who witnessed many of the bureaucratic quirks and confusions Menges describes, I have sympathy for some of his complaints. But Menges's book, though evocative and lively, is finally not about the NSC system at all. It is about the life and thoughts of its author. Unlike Ledeen's book, Menges's book has a bibliography. There are 77 items: 28 cited from U.S. government sources, 49 listed under "Selected Writings of Constantine C. Menges." It also has an index. In the index, under "Menges, Constantine C.," there are 14 entries, including "birth of," "childhood of," "education of," "family history of," "immigration of," "marriage of," and "physical description of."

Missing is "humor of." This is a pity because, quite unwittingly, Menges has written some very amusing passages. Not least among them is his central thesis. It is, briefly, that he, Menges, could have saved the president and the country from Iran-*contra*. On August 6, 1985, while still on the NSC staff, Menges wrote a 12-page letter to Reagan warning him that "McFarlane and Poindexter were not permitting the NSC to function in the way it was supposed to and were at times actually keeping the president in the dark." He tried through at least three separate back-channels to deliver the letter, and he failed. And so he has written his book, in the belief that "if the president had read my letter, he would have acted upon it. And if he acted on it . . . I believe, the Iran-*contra* affair, which for a time threatened the Reagan presidency itself, would never have happened." No less.

Now, the Tower Commission Report and Donald Regan's memoir are among many sources one can consult for a flavor of Ronald Reagan's manner of work. The notion that Reagan would read a 12-page back-channel letter attacking two of his most loyal and dedicated aides and "act upon it" strains credulity. My guess is that if the president had read the letter, his only "action" would have been to put it in his outbox, whereupon it would have appeared on McFarlane's desk, and Menges would have been relieved of his duties a year earlier.

MENGES WAS a unique case. My own direct experiences with him were harmless enough, but even I understood that he was relentless in making his views known, at the most inappropriate moments, to anyone who wanted to listen. In the period in which we overlapped on the NSC staff, it was sometimes difficult to get a word in edgewise if Menges opened his mouth during the morning staff meeting. On the occasions when I needed to make a point to McFarlane before he went up to meet with the senior staff, I deliberately came in early to get a lucky seat "to the left of Menges."

Had Menges not pestered so much, and shown more tolerance for the possibility that others might occasionally have a point, he might still have his job. But he gives the feeling that he arrived at the NSC intent on finding demons. The incredible detail with which he recalls his first moments in the White House suggests that he intended to keep a blow-by-blow record of every move, every cup of coffee, every put-down, every stare. When things didn't go his way, he became petulant and inquisitorial.

Menges likes to think that his failure to work effectively with his colleagues was the result of ideology. (His heroes and heroines are Casey, Weinberger, Kirkpatrick, Jack Kemp.) He believes that Shultz's State Department and the McFarlane-Deaver-Poindexter cabal were intent on cutting out all the "Reaganites" from key decisions, unable to accept that even Ronald and Nancy Reagan had long ceased, by his definition, to be full-fledged "Reaganites," but had instead embraced the more homely pragmatism of George Shultz. He constantly refers to something he calls the "Foreign Policy Cabinet," consisting of Shultz, Weinberger, Casey, and Kirkpatrick. On occasion he took it upon himself to brief the last three members when he believed that Shultz was "plotting" against the president's policy. But the fact is that many of the key State Department jobs went to Reagan supporters, including William Clark, John Whitehead, Chester Crocker, Richard Burt, Paul Wolfowitz, Gaston Sigur, Langhorne Motley, and Elliott Abrams.

Of course the State Department is often at odds with other branches of the bureaucracy. But these turf battles are

THE WHALE

Blueberries slow sun burnishes
glint out from mist.

What else do foghorns so persistently
create but silence?

Bulk dissolving into death,
no pilgrim can make out the shape,

the body's vanished quickness
or sense of the invisible adrift.

RACHEL HADAS

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rarely monolithic, twilight struggles. In my time it was often difficult to discern a "State Department" position on the Middle East. Each bureau had its own strong views. During the 1982 Lebanon war, members of State's Policy Planning staff would come over to my NSC office to find out what Foggy Bottom was up to. The truth is that the bureaucracy has its own immune system, and it will inevitably reject a Menges, of the left, the right, or the center.

CARNES LORD also served on the Reagan NSC. He, too, was not happy with the way things were run. But his book, unlike Ledeen's and Menges's, is a serious study of government, free of vitriol, scrupulous and scholarly. Perhaps, to a fault; this is the sort of book that Michael Dukakis might take to the beach. Indeed, Dukakis, if he wins, or Bush, if he wins, would do well to consult *The Presidency and the Management of National Security*. After Iran-*contra*, the next president will be watched closely for his management of the foreign policy apparatus at the White House.

Most of Lord's book concerns the relationship between the presidency and the role of the NSC system. Lord believes that the Reagan administration has been unable to grasp "the reins of a rogue bureaucracy." He points to disarray within the administration on issues from arms control to counterintelligence and counterterrorism. He pertinently cites the Reykjavik summit as evidence of the lack of a coherent strategy for dealing with nuclear weapons and more generally with the Soviet Union.

Lord understands that each of the important national security bureaucracies retains a core group of career professionals who jealously guard their prerogatives, who are inherently suspicious of a new president, with his new team of political appointees prepared to challenge the way things are done. The answer, according to Lord, is not to try to replace the careerists with political appointees, but to "structure organizational constraints so as to enable outsiders and careerists alike to function as loyal and effective officers of the president." To do this, the president must strengthen the White House staff structure with "enhanced White House control over the process of interagency policy development."

The NSC was created in 1947 by the National Security Act. It was created as part of an effort by Congress and the Army to unify the defense establishment under a secretary of defense, and to bring both the Navy and the White House—seen as potential "mavericks" on strategic issues—into line with the predominant military views. Truman made little use of the institution until the outbreak of the Korean War. Under Eisenhower, the system flourished. As Lord points out, Eisenhower exercised great personal control over the national security agenda, even though his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, was clearly in charge of day-to-day operations. Under Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Carter, the NSC became more operational. The Reagan years have seen extremes of passivity on the one hand and widespread covert operations, conducted by Colonel North, on the other.

Public rivalry between the NSC and State and Defense grew as the NSC staff became more involved in operations. Lord doesn't believe the NSC should be solely a coordinating agency; he wants it also to focus on strategic planning. All this is fine, as far as it goes. The problem is that "operations" is the most exciting part of government and, in the short run, the most rewarding. North and Poindexter rose to powerful positions in the White House, after all, because of their proven operational acumen, not because of their analytic gifts. Neither had any solid background in international relations (unlike McFarlane), but both worked long hours without complaining, and reached the apex of their credibility when, together, they successfully managed the *Achille Lauro* crisis.

ONE OF THE supreme ironies of the Reagan administration must surely be that in its dying days its new NSC team is doing well. Not perfectly, of course; it still lacks a concept of where American foreign policy should be heading. And the hard right will continue to argue that Shultz is now so powerful, and the White House so pliant, that he alone determines the international agenda. But Shultz is showing results. I suspect (I hope) that Shultz's blend of patience, compromise, and the occasional "big stick" will be popular with the next administration, no matter who wins.

Still, Shultz's successes have been a long time coming, and they owe rather a lot to the obliging behavior of Mikhail Gorbachev. The next president cannot assume that the prevailing "crisis free" atmosphere will continue. Early in the transition, he should announce his choices for the top national security jobs, especially the NSC adviser and the secretary of state. In choosing his team, he must honor "chemistry." He must also honor hierarchy: that is, he must make clear that while he expects the NSC to play the key role in developing the agenda for the next four years and coordinating the implementation of policy, day-to-day operations must be left to individual agencies, and the secretary of state must be the primary spokesman and negotiator on foreign policy. Most important, perhaps, the president must make a deadly serious effort to establish a bipartisan consensus on the central issues of foreign policy. (He could offer one or two senior appointments to persons of the losing party.)

None of these actions, of course, nor Lord's more detailed blueprint will guarantee success. Democracies are not well suited to rational restructuring. The government of the United States will never be as efficient as the best multinational corporations. That fact represents a strength of the American tradition, not just a weakness. But there *is* an urgent need for a sense of mission, a concept, a plan. The international environment is changing, and not only in the Soviet Union. The ground rules for the next century will be laid in the next decade. The United States need not await an inevitable decline. It may continue in the world to be prima inter pares; but it must find ways to share power profitably and gracefully.

GEOFFREY KEMP

Geoffrey Kemp is senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He served on the NSC staff from 1981 to 1984.

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 6*

thinkers as Arthur Laffer, Jack Kemp and Ronald Reagan. I think it should be called the Doo-Doo principle in his honor.

DON GAINES
Eleray, Illinois

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Christian Whales, Rejoice!

"MERCY HAS a human heart / Pity, a human face," wrote Blake. Perhaps. But self-pity, we now know, has the face of a whale. Never mind the varying motives of the American oil companies, the Soviet icebreakers, or the Eskimos who came to the rescue of our large mammal friends trapped in the ice off the coast of Alaska. (First prize for p.r. savvy goes to the Eskimos, who now plan on using the newly cleared channels to hunt other whale species.) Most people who watched the unfolding drama on TV didn't care so much about the whales as *whales*. They cared about the whales as people—like the little old lady who considers her poodle a person. In fact, judging by the relatively scant attention the networks gave that same week to the hundreds of Filipinos who drowned in Typhoon Ruby, Americans cared more about the whales up north than they did about their brethren elsewhere. But maybe I'm being too hard-hearted. This is the first bit of environmental good news we've had all year. Tired of hearing about medical waste on the beaches, the greenhouse effect, and radioactive contamination, we've seized upon this absurd, expensive enterprise (quietly ridiculed by marine biologists, mind you) as proof we humans aren't so bad after all. Just the sort of self-congratulatory slap on the back we don't deserve.

NATIONAL SENTIMENT about Texas has been mellowing ever since Big John Connally had to auction off the greater part of his possessions. Until the nation's hearts were softened by the sight of that tall bear of a man reduced to selling his own saddle, the feelings evoked by the Lone Star State's economic demise were best summed up by the TNR editor who wrote, "Let 'Em Rot in the Sun." Now that Texas's back is truly broken and this unlikely land of tumbleweeds and twisters has produced the campaign's most likable son, Lloyd Bentsen, everybody can afford to be a little nicer. But take it from me, a former resident of the boom-or-bust state, the good press will only last as long as the slump does.

ONE CITY in Texas that doesn't seem to be benefitting from this publicity bonanza is Dallas. For years, when people were asked what first came to mind when they thought of Big D, they invariably said Kennedy's assassination. In the early '80s, the popularity of *Dallas* (the TV show) and the success of the Cowboys helped redefine the city's image and deflect attention from its day of infamy. But now that the nation's yuppies are busy pawing over their past, the '60s-'80s connection has rekindled the long-simmering hatred of the city that killed JFK. Recently I saw *The Thin Blue Line*, Errol Morris's documentary about a cop-killing in Dallas in 1976. The film tells the story of how Randall Dale Adams, a man almost certainly innocent, was nonetheless prosecuted and convicted of murder. Near film's end, Adams himself levies an indictment against the city that has jailed him for life: "Dallas County is hell on earth," he pronounces darkly (and who could blame him for thinking so). But I can't help but think this story also resonates because of its setting. Only Dallas, says the screenplay's subtle subtext, could have spawned this travesty of justice. (All the same, Dallas County officials should grant Adams the retrial he deserves and show the nation its capacity for fairness.)

PERHAPS *Final Disclosure*, a book due out in November from David Belin, a former member of the Warren Commission, will help restore Dallas's reputation. Belin gives the facts of Kennedy's assassination in full, and in the process reveals how countless conspiracy books have distorted or omitted evidence to create their own sensational accounts of Lee Harvey Oswald's lone act. Maybe now people will transfer some of the hatred they bear toward Dallas to those who have so irresponsibly profited from the death of JFK.

YET ANOTHER regrettable consequence of the last eight years: the Reagan administration has given religion a bad name (that is, if you're like me and consider yourself both a Democrat and an Episcopalian). Admit a faith in God and the left will assume you're a Bible-carrying member of the Moral Majority. Say you're a liberal and the right will brand you an atheist. Insist, *insist* you're a Christian liberal, and most people will greet your proclamation with dumbfounded incredulity. The only exceptions to this rule are Catholics and New Agers—that is, if you consider New Age a religion. I don't.

BUT THERE IS one religious issue on which I remain a staunch conservative: reform of gender-specific language in the hymnals of the Episcopal Church. The church has launched a holy crusade to strike any vestige of patriarchal sexism from the hymnbook. In their zealous fanaticism, they have left no tune unturned. Unlike the linguistic neutering now taking place in law, for example, the church's revisions strive for poetry. One of the most common substitutions in the new hymnal is "friends" for "men." (You can see the logic: friends and men rhyme; both are one syllable.) I first encountered this crude substitution (which now greets me almost every Sunday) at a Christmas Eve service last year. The congregation had risen to sing a rousing rendition of "Christian Men, Rejoice!" when the choirmaster ominously approached the pulpit. "The carol has been *reformed*," he declared, with about as much Christmas spirit as the grim reaper. "You are now required to sing 'Christian *friends*,' not 'Christian men'!" And so the gathered dutifully and solemnly sung. But whatever Christmas spirit there was after that solemn pronouncement was confounded by the snickers that wafted with the incense across the pews. Behind me I heard a muffled "Christ!" and "Je-sus!" I couldn't help but wonder, Christian friends? What about Christian enemies? No rejoicing for them? That hardly seemed the Christmas spirit. How long would it be before Christmas cards read "Peace on earth, good will towards friends?" A different proposition altogether from the brotherly (or sisterly) benediction to all mankind. The new language is meant to be more inclusive (of women). Now it's worse: it excludes everyone who isn't a bosom-buddy. (Silly? Too subtle? No more so than the complaints that prompted the changes in the first place.) Don't get me wrong. I'm all for including women in the church. As priests, as bishops, as archbishop of Canterbury. But for this avid singer of hymns on high, this tampering with the rather harmless language of the hymnal seems just a bit, well, ungodly.

SARA MOSLE

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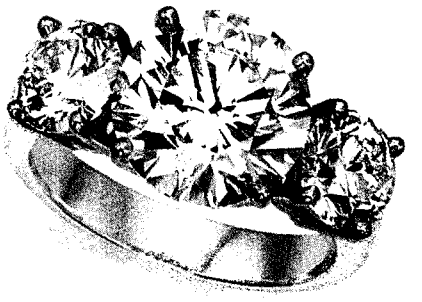

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